

Portland State University  
**PDXScholar**

---

Focal Point

School of Social Work

---

2000

## Focal Point, Volume 14 Number 02

Portland State University. Regional Research Institute

Follow this and additional works at: [https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/ssw\\_focalpoint](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/ssw_focalpoint)



Part of the [Social Policy Commons](#), [Social Welfare Commons](#), and the [Social Work Commons](#)

**Let us know how access to this document benefits you.**

---

### Recommended Citation

Portland State University. Regional Research Institute, "Focal Point, Volume 14 Number 02" (2000). *Focal Point*. 20.

[https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/ssw\\_focalpoint/20](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/ssw_focalpoint/20)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Focal Point by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. For more information, please contact [pdxscholar@pdx.edu](mailto:pdxscholar@pdx.edu).

# FOCAL POINT

*A National Bulletin on Family Support and Children's Mental Health*



## Roles for Youth in Systems of Care



Fall, 2000

## Fall, 2000

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Roles for Youth in Systems of Care<br>Editorial Committee at RTC . . . . .  | 3  |
| Being Our Own Advocates<br>Youth and Young Adults as Partners in<br>Planning Evaluation and Policy Making<br>[REDACTED] . . . . . | 5  |
| Standing on the Shoulders of Giants<br>George Maciejewski . . . . .   | 6  |
| Valuing the Voice of Our Young People<br>Juliet Choi . . . . .  | 9  |
| Youth Development: Putting Theory<br>Into Practice<br>Mindy Linetsky . . . . .  | 11 |
| What One "Yooper" Has Learned About<br>Youth Involvement<br>Ruth Almen . . . . .  | 14 |
| Bringing Youth to the Table<br>Lauren Stevenson . . . . .   | 16 |
| Listening To Voices<br>Cheri Villines . . . . .   | 22 |
| Lessons in Strengths-based Youth Involvement:<br>Minding the Mays, Dos and the Possibles<br>Michelle Chalmers . . . . .           | 24 |
| Youth Millenium 2000<br>Jan Davis, Chalonda Smith,<br>Roderick McCants . . . . .  | 28 |
| Youth Are the Future of America<br>Dela Hughes, et al . . . . .   | 32 |
| Youth In Focus<br>Jonathan London . . . . .   | 35 |
| Announcements<br>Family Strengths Conference 2000 . . . . .   | 8  |
| Building A Bridge . . . . .   | 23 |
| Columns<br>Notes and Comments . . . . .   | 19 |
| Youth Expressions . . . . .   | 20 |
| Partnership News . . . . .  | 37 |
| Publications . . . . .  | 38 |

### FOCAL POINT

A publication of the Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health.  
Copyright © 2000 by the Regional Research Institute for Human Services. All rights reserved. Permission to reproduce articles may be obtained by contacting the editor.  
The Research and Training Center was established in 1984 with funding from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Health and Human Services.  
The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the funding agencies.  
We invite our audience to submit letters and comments.

**Focal Point:** Elizabeth Caplan, Editor  
[caplane@rri.pdx.edu](mailto:caplane@rri.pdx.edu)  
Denise Schmit, Publication Coordinator  
[rtcpubs@pdx.edu](mailto:rtcpubs@pdx.edu)

## Introducing

### OUR NEWLY REDESIGNED WEBSITE: [www.rtc.pdx.edu](http://www.rtc.pdx.edu)

For more information on youth and young adult roles in planning, evaluating, and providing services in children's mental health, visit the new Interact! section of our website, where you can:

- Take our survey on youth roles in systems of care
- Read a complete transcript of the Youth Panel from the 2000 Building on Family Strengths conference
- Obtain more information about references cited in some of the articles in this issue of *Focal Point*
- Follow internet links to organizations providing materials and training for youth development, as well as links to model programs and youth-edited websites and e-zines.
- Read reviews of training materials and products of youth-led research
- Submit a description of your own experience as a youth taking on one or more of these roles, or as an adult partnering with youth in these roles
- Read more poetry and see more art by youth

Also on the Interact! pages you can:

- Read reviews of recent non-technical, user-friendly books and articles in the field of children's mental health
- Submit your own review of a book or other work which you feel is interesting and important
- Rate a website from our links, or nominate a website to include among our links

Other highlights of our newly-redesigned site include our new publications pages where you can:

- Search the database of RTC publications by author, topic, or type of publication
- Order publications using our new shopping cart
- Submit your order electronically via email
- Read recent conference proceedings online, or order print versions

All of these pages can be easily found from our home page, [www.rtc.pdx.edu](http://www.rtc.pdx.edu)

Y ahora tenemos recursos en español. Visitenos en nuestra "home page" en español, que se puede alcanzar de [www.rtc.pdx.edu](http://www.rtc.pdx.edu). En nuestro sitio en la red mundial, se encuentran materiales de la conferencia en español e información sobre el Centro de Investigación y Entrenamiento. También se puede conectar con información en la red mundial que se trata de: la salud mental y emocional de los niños y adolescentes; incapacidades y diagnoses específicas; educación para los niños que tienen trastornos de comportamiento e incapacidades emocionales; y más



## ROLES FOR YOUTH IN SYSTEMS OF CARE

This issue of *Focal Point* focuses on youth and young adults taking on significant roles in the planning, evaluation, and provision of mental health and other human services for youth and children. The initial momentum for this issue came from the enthusiastic response which greeted a plenary panel session devoted to the same topic, which took place during the RTC's 2000 Building on Family Strengths Conference. During the panel session, we heard from young people—both consumers and past consumers of services—who were having a significant impact on the services they received and/or the services received by other young people and their families. We also heard from adult panelists who were partnering with the young people to craft, facilitate, and/or support these roles.

This issue starts off with an article by youth panel moderator [REDACTED], who summarizes the panelists' descriptions of the successes and the difficulties they encountered as they worked to create roles for youth at the local, state, and/or national level (a complete transcript is available on our *Interact!* web pages). Juliet Choi's article provides a description of further possibilities for roles for youth at different levels of the service system.

Several of the articles included in this issue discuss the rationale for developing these roles for young people, arguing that allowing youth to have a voice in systems of care can improve programs and outcomes for youth, and can also build young people's leadership skills, self-confidence, and sense of commitment and purpose. The articles from the Community Network for Youth Development and the National Network for Youth are perhaps the most explicit statements

of how this approach to partnering with youth represents a logical extension of the move away from deficit-based models of mental illness, and toward strengths-based models of youth development. George Maciejewski points out in his article that the essential elements of this philosophy have been around for at least a century. In his moving reflections on the youth panel, he wonders if perhaps now is the time when the sacrifices of early advocates will be redeemed through real progress in empowering children.

Several of the articles are cautionary in citing the difficulties that accompany the efforts of youth and adults to partner together. The authors point out that it is not easy for adults to give up a meaningful measure of power and resources, and to allow their own agendas to be shaped significantly by the agendas of youth partners. Difficulties also arise for adults and youth—whose beliefs, values, and experiences may well diverge in many areas—to come together through the beliefs, values, and experiences which they *do* hold in common, so that they can engage in productive work towards shared goals. In the discussions that we have had with people across the country around this topic, we have heard of many efforts which have floundered, and others which have been abandoned.

During the youth panel, a sense of real excitement filled the room, as the presenters shared their vision and their experiences of the partnerships they had built. Yet there were also several sobering reminders of the difficulties and pitfalls that can derail such efforts. Panelists and audience members collaborated to produce a list of the benefits that can result from successful partnering with youth in services, and another list of the ob-

stacles that prevent partnerships from working. The list of barriers was almost twice as long as the list of benefits. A bit later in the session, the panelists asked members of the audience to raise their hands if they supported the idea of empowering youth in the types of roles we had been discussing. Of the more than 300 people in the room, nearly every one raised a hand. The panelists then asked for the hands of people whose organizations actually supported youth in these roles. Four or five hands stayed up—a deflating surprise. But it was the general absence of youth in the audience that was perhaps the most obvious reminder that excitement and optimism are only the first steps in a process of change.

Another step is being taken when individual young people are able to speak with a powerful voice in planning their own services, perhaps by participating actively on their own IEP or wraparound planning team. In their articles, both Della Hughes and "Yoooper" Ruth Alman provide examples of the benefits which come to young people who are encouraged to use their voice in wraparound planning. Both authors point out that it is not just the youth who potentially stand to gain from this sort of participation, as both describe some valuable lessons that adults have learned from partnering with youth on wraparound teams.

Within service providing and advocacy organizations, youth can have significant impact on programs or services as they work in paid staff or volunteer positions and/or serve on committees or boards of directors. In these roles we have seen youth partnering with adults in designing or evaluating programs, setting organizational priorities, hiring and evaluating staff, and providing training

both within and outside of the organization. In this issue, Lauren Stevenson provides examples of roles for youth at several of the grantee sites supported by the Center for Mental Health Services' Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program.

Several other articles detail the experiences of adults and youth who have partnered at the organizational level. Cheri Villines describes how working in partnership with a teen advisory board has helped a residential program become more responsive and more effective in providing services to its youth clients. Michelle Chalmers describes how involving youth has helped Growing Home move closer to its vision of of itself as an organization using a strengths-based approach to positive youth development for young people in therapeutic foster care. Often, as Martan Mendenhall points out, young people's first priority when assuming leadership roles is to advocate for further increases in youth voice and youth roles in the organization. Another top priority, fully recognized by the authors describing the activities of the Beacon Initiative and Youth Millennium 2000, is the desire for young people who have received services to have opportunities to "give back" through community service.

These and other organizations are also settings in which youth provide services to peers, as peer counselors,

advocates, mentors, or mediators. The authors from the National Network for Youth describe how the commitment to youth partnerships at Huckleberry House has led to the creation of part-time staff positions for youth counselors, equal to adult part-time positions in training, responsibilities, and wages. Youth Millennium 2000 and its COPES units provide opportunities for youth who have made progress in managing their mental health symptoms to serve as mentors to other youth in the program.

Organizations partnering with youth have developed unique materials and services which they are able to share with other groups. Chalmers writes that Growing Home has two publications which were developed through partnerships with youth, and which are based on the experiences and expertise of youth who have been in foster care. One of these publications is a guide for youth entering foster care which includes information about how the child welfare system works and what to expect from courts and service providers. The second publication is a journal and guide to be used as a tool for youth to build the strengths and vision they need as they transition from foster care to independence. The Teen Board at the Deveraux residential program in Georgia has shared with numerous other groups several of the products of its work, including their consumer satisfaction survey, and the consumer-

friendly handbook given to young people as they enter the facility.

Other organizations have developed valuable materials as a product of youth-led research. Jonathan London's article details how Youth in Focus provides training and support for youth-led research, and describes the impact that the products of youth-led research have had on plans for juvenile justice reforms in San Francisco, as well as on other programs and policies in northern California. *Time to Listen*, a book based on research conducted by young people receiving mental health services in the United Kingdom and reviewed on our website, provides insight into the perspectives of youth consumers. Equally important, the book also describes in some detail the challenges which the project faced in the course of partnering with youth in the research process. *Mauve*, a CD-ROM produced by youth researchers in Canada, is also reviewed on our website, as are several other products of youth-led research.

Taken together, these articles tell a wide variety of success stories about voices for youth in systems of care. They also represent knowledge and experience gained from sustained efforts to develop partnerships between adults and young people. People who have made such efforts often express the wish that more information and more resources had been available to them when they started. We hope that this issue of *Focal Point/ Interact!* will prove useful in this regard.

## Interact!

As a complement to the information presented in this issue of *Focal Point*, we have also developed a series of web pages on the Interact! section of our website ([www.rtc.pdx.edu](http://www.rtc.pdx.edu)).

The Interact! pages are devoted to the same topic, and contain internet links to many of the organizations, projects, and programs described in this issue of *Focal Point*. Interact! also includes additional articles, book reviews, poetry, and art by youth and adults, as well as a survey on roles for youth in systems of care. Additional highlights of the Interact! pages—and other changes to our newly redesigned website—are described in the announcement on the second page of this issue.

### THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE FOR THIS ISSUE OF FOCAL POINT:

Janet Walker, Michael Pullman, Kathryn Schutte, Donna Fleming, Denise Schmit, Rachel Elizabeth and Elizabeth Caplan and Jonathan Cooke wishes to thank Mindy Linetzky, Caroline Bowles, Shane Ama, Kimberly Kendziora and most especially all the youth who contributed art, poetry and their keen insights, without which this issue would not have been possible.



## BEING OUR OWN ADVOCATES

### *Youth and Young Adults as Partners in Planning, Evaluation and Policy Making*

**B**eing Our Own Advocates was a session dedicated to discussing different ways that young people are involved on a local, state, and national level. Four youth and two adult representatives talked about the variety of ways they are involved in different systems of care and policy making.

Representatives from the Devereaux Georgia Treatment Network talked about their Teen Advisory Board, which helps develop policies at a residential treatment facility. LeRoy McLeod, the current chair of the Teen Advisory Board, explained the Board is a place where any issues that involve youth at the facility can be addressed. They started by involving the youth in helping to create a client satisfaction survey. They found the youth had a number of things they wished to address regarding their treatment. Youth involved on the Teen Advisory Board have helped rewrite the student handbook so that it is more user-friendly. They also discuss issues of day-to-day living at the treatment facility—everything, from which movies should be shown, to concerns about religion.

Cheri Villines, one of the staff liaisons to the Teen Advisory Board, acknowledged there have been some challenges getting the staff to support the Board. Staff thought the Board was a great idea until the youth actually wanted to start making changes at the facility. Many staff members believe youth are not able to understand how a board operates and that the procedures will be too overwhelming for them. There is also the presumption that youth are too disruptive to be involved in policy making. They have tried to change that stereotype by training the youth and giving

them the skill they need to participate effectively. Cheri's philosophy is that the staff must "assume that the youth are experts in solving problem dilemmas."

Involvement with the Teen Advisory Board empowers youth and helps them become more involved in their treatment programs. The Board is run like any other board meeting, thereby providing the skills necessary for the youth to participate on any other board. Antonio Chambers, a former chairperson, discussed how serving on the Board helped prepare him to serve on boards in other organizations such as the Georgia Parent Support Network, and the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health Board of Directors. It also gave him the skills necessary to advocate for himself and others in his community.

Cheri said the most significant policy change at Devereaux is that now "the consumer will serve on every committee within the structure of our program."

Shante Packer talked about her experience in a group called Teens with Choices in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The group was started as an adjunct to wraparound services in her community. They formed the group to include youth from throughout the community, not just those receiving wraparound services. Initially, some of the youth wanted to become peer mentors, but found not all people in the group were interested in becoming mentors. They focused instead on becoming known in their community as volunteers and fund-raisers to "give back to the community." Participation in the group is completely voluntary and they do a lot of fund raising for other organizations.

Verneesha Banks, the adult facilitator of the group, added that funding is one of the main concerns of the group. They rely on their fund-raising to pay for the fun activities they do, like bowling and skating, but the primary focus of the group is to give back to the community.

Jessika Glick, a former young adult consumer, talked about her role as a Youth Coordinator at the Rhode Island Parent Support Network. She originally started working at the Parent Support Network as a volunteer youth leader, and served on the PSN Board of Directors. Eventually her position was written into a family leadership grant and she was able to get paid for the work she was doing. Youth were recruited to her group from the families that were receiving services at the Parent Support Network as well as other agencies.

The group's first project was filming a documentary on teen mental health and presenting it at the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health Conference in Washington, DC. Eventually they created a mission statement, rules and guidelines. The focus of the group now is to teach self-advocacy and leadership skills, do community service and volunteer activities, and plan fun activities. The youth are involved in the whole process of deciding which activities they wish to participate in. Jessika feels she is able to form a strong bond with youth in her group because she is a former consumer herself and has gone through many of the things they are now experiencing. She also emphasized it is important to provide training and support for someone in her position.

Many organizations are involving

youth on a national level as well. The Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health and the National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health at Georgetown University has youth presentations at their conferences and youth that serve on their Boards. Other organizations mentioned were: Destination Future (a group that holds an annual conference on independent living), Survivors of the System, and the Canadian

Youth and Care Network.

The main point all of these young people brought forth was that involving youth helps to decrease negative stereotypes about youths' ability to work with adults and empowers them to make better decisions and become actively involved in their treatment. Youth appreciate opportunities for learning, growth and community involvement. Being involved can be both educational and fun. All of the youth

agreed it is important that there are no labels attached to their groups, since being involved helps prepare them for their future, no matter what career path they choose.

*A full transcript of the session and more information is available on our Interact! page ([www.rtc.pdx.edu](http://www.rtc.pdx.edu)).*

██████████ is a young adult advocate and a former consumer of mental health services.

Relections on the Youth Panel at the Research and Training Center's  
2000 Building on Family Strengths Conference, Portland, Oregon

## STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

Should children become active stakeholders in the outcomes of their mental health care? In the 1990's many factors led to the inclusion of adult recipients of services into decision making. Whether the "consumer-driven" re-invention of government and public services, or the attempts at "customer satisfaction" by managed health care in the private sector, such efforts at "quality management" were born of goals to improve efficiency, effectiveness, or other market-oriented outcomes. But the idea of including children's and youth voices into planning their own care hearkens back to earlier times, with simpler, and perhaps nobler, motives.

Sitting in the audience of the Saturday Plenary sessions of the PSU Family Strengths Conference this past April, gazing up at the youthful faces among the panelists, listening to the hesitant voices of the earnest self-advocates, I could not help but feel a surge of optimism and hope for the future of mental health services. Despite the inevitable grave warnings from someone who feared that progress at including youth should not be at the expense of parental inclusion, the majority of the attendees seemed intrigued with the idea of client/youth empowerment. "Were the

youth advocates involved in the hiring of staff," one curious listener queried. This concept seemed too extreme for even the progressive agency folk at the table, apologetic though they were. Here was a quiet revolution which was not likely to be televised; the logical next step in fully integrated service delivery was in nascent bloom before the conference participants' eyes. Small steps though they may be, the words of Neil Armstrong echoed in my mind: "Here's one small step for man, a giant leap forward for mankind." I wondered whether the youth panelists knew how significant their presence was. Did they have any comprehension that their participation was the culmination of generations of efforts to establish and maintain children's rights? What did they know of the history of the struggle to treat children with dignity and respect? Would their generation have to recapitulate the learning, the hard won advances, or would they be lost, to be promoted yet again in some future enlightened time? How I wanted to reach out to tell those young pioneering people: take pride in your roles! This is something significant, not just a small piece of your life. Persevere! Stay involved! If only they knew of the sacrifices made by those

who preceeded them. Was there anyone here who knew the stories of the giants in the field of championing children's rights like Pestalozzi, Mann, Montessori, Dewey, Makarenko, Korczak? Or would they care about their heritage?

Janusz Korczak was a name as familiar to parents through many parts of pre-War Europe as Benjamin Spock has been in post-War United States. When the United Nations declared 1979 as "The Year of the Child", that year was also dedicated to the memory of Janusz Korczak, as it was the centenary of his birth. As early as 1911 he became the director of an orphanage, The House of Children, in Warsaw, Poland, and stayed in this post until annihilated by the Nazis in 1942. Unfortunately, he is most remembered for choosing to go to the death camps with the 200 orphans under his care rather than escape death himself. But those who knew him and his work testify to the real reasons he should be remembered. In the course of his career he was a playwright, a pediatrician, an educator, a novelist, a child advocate and philosopher, devoted to meeting the needs of children. He sought to rectify the conditions of neglect, abuse and disempowerment of children, regard-

less of their nationality or religion. Known as the “Champion of the Children”, in the course of his life he wrote some twenty books related to the care and upbringing of children, and received Poland’s highest literary award, as well as the German Peace Prize, posthumously.

Korczak’s ideas about youth empowerment and self-governance by contemporary standards seem either obvious, radical to the extreme, or hopelessly idealistic. Yet his writings were unclouded by sentimentality; many even find his clinical observations as tinged with pessimism, his despairing conclusions about human nature a product of his war-torn times (Korczak served in the military as a physician in both WWI and the Polish-Soviet War that followed). Given that his vision of treating youth as human beings first, and as children second, is still not commonly accepted in any culture nearly 100 years after he began advocating it, perhaps ultimately Korczak was simply a realist, who saw the long road ahead of humanity before respect for children would be acknowledged and practiced as he espoused.

Seeking to reach as many people as possible with his message of inclusion and respect, Korczak was a pioneer in the use of mass media, even hosting his own radio show, to promote the cause of child advocacy and to teach parenting skills and attitudes which could redress the effects of the disempowerment of children. He attempted to put into practice what he preached, giving children a voice, and by giving them real opportunities to take part in decision-making. His famous experiments in juvenile justice, the Children’s Court, actually had children as judges presiding over the proceedings—even adults had to submit to their judgments. He founded *The Little Review*, a successful national weekly newspaper produced by and for children, edited by himself, a boy and a girl.

Dr. Korczak opposed the use of punishment, viewing its use as an instinctive response born of frustration



*Primary Colors Choir from Boise Eliot School performed at RTC’s Building on Family Strengths Conference (top and lower right). Left, conference attendees.*

when an adult does not know what else to do. Ideas he promoted are now considered as basic tenets of child psychology. His view that how a child is treated will affect how he later behaves, although more commonplace now than during his life, still is being verified in contemporary research (e.g., in *The Men They Will Become: the Nature and Nurture of Male Character*, (1999), author Eli Newberger, M.D., explores the connection between how male children are raised and the subsequent incidence of violence and abuse toward others). Dr. Korczak once rebuked a reluctant employee of the orphanage, who had refused to deal with the excrement of a minority youth, by washing out the diaper himself, reminding the staff member that it was a child’s need being met and not that of any particular ethnic group. He regularly partici-

pated in the “menial” chores of caring for the children in his charge, whether clearing tables, washing dishes or serving food, declaring often that every encounter with a youth in the course of their day was an opportunity: to express love, to build confidence, to offer protection, to extend support, or simply to engage in dialogue.

The NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) in Great Britain has declared the elimination of child abuse as its top priority and “the” social cause of the new millennium. Per their website, the organization has set a goal to accomplish this “fundamental shift in our society’s values, attitudes and behaviour towards children” within one generation. Towards this end, the NSPCC is supporting the publication of Korczak’s ideas in an edited English



language version. *A Voice for the Child: The Inspirational Works of Janusz Korczak*, edited by Sandra Joseph, is composed of excerpts from many of his texts, including *How to Love A Child* and *The Child's Right to Respect*, and reflects to English readers the charm, warmth and wisdom of this caring man.

It was not until 1979, at the request of Poland, that the United Nations

began to draft a convention on the Rights of the Child, to be based on ideas promulgated by Korczak more than 50 years earlier (see the appendix to Jean Lifton's biography of Korczak, *The King of Children*, for Korczak's *Declaration of the Rights of a Child*). In November of 1989 the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, passing it unanimously. Ironically, the

last entry in Korczak's *Ghetto Diary*, written before he joined his children in the gas chambers at Treblinka, was the following entry: "Who will care about what I am writing here? Perhaps fifty years from now someone will care." On that final day as he marched with his charges out of the orphanage, he had them proudly carry a green flag through the streets of the Warsaw Ghetto, onto the cattlecars and to the death camp, refusing to abandon once again the orphaned children who had already suffered the greatest abandonment a child can suffer. Much has been made of his final act, interpreted through various lenses of politics, spirituality, morality and psychology. But perhaps Korczak's final choice was predominantly an expression of ultimate commitment to the children for whom he had assumed responsibility; what other choice could he make? Today a monument to the victims stands at the former death camp in Poland; many stones, inscribed with the names of towns and nations from which the victims arrived, are scattered throughout a field. Only one inscription includes the name of an individual who perished, simply reading in Polish, "Janusz Korczak i dzieci" (Janusz Korczak and children).

Dr. Korczak would in all likelihood have had no problem answering the question posed at the start of this article; *isn't empowerment and inclusion of children into decision making about their mental health treatment an idea whose time has finally come? What possible reason could there be to deny a child such a right?*

For more information, visit the website [www.korczak.org.uk](http://www.korczak.org.uk); also, the English language biography of Korczak by Jean Lifton, although out of print, is available on the site among the links, as is a link to the NSPCC.

George Maciejewski currently serves as a Special Education Case Coordinator at Direction Services, Portland Public School District. He has a combined total over 25 years experience serving families and children through various roles in children's mental health.

### Building on Family Strengths Conference 2000 a Success!

The annual *Building On Family Strengths* conference held on April 6-8, 2000 at the Hilton Hotel in Portland, Oregon was a resounding success. Nirbhay Singh, professor of psychiatry, pediatrics, and clinical psychology at the Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA, gave a compassionate and thought-provoking keynote speech about the wisdom and practicality of using a strengths based approach in his clinical practice. Other Conference highlights included a research plenary focussing on Cultural Diversity and Research in Children's Mental Health as well as a Youth Panel/Plenary titled "Being Our Own Advocates: Youth and Young Adults as Partners in Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Making."

In addition to the forty plus information-packed paper and symposia presentations led by family members, researchers, service providers, and other advocates, the conference introduced a Native American track of workshops. The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) based in Portland, Oregon with support from the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health brought together Indian family members from twenty-two tribes to continue their efforts to organize and advocate for the mental health needs of Indian children and their families. Born out of this intensive gathering of Native American parents and advocates was the creation of a national organization called *Intertribal Voices of Children and Families*. Other conference highlights included a short performance by the Boise Eliot (a local elementary school) Primary Colors Choir at lunch on Friday.

For a more detailed account of the conference, the 2000 Conference Proceedings will soon be available to order or download from our website <http://www.rtc.pdx.edu>, or contact the Publications Coordinator at (503) 725-4175.

**Would you like to make a presentation at the 2001 Building on Family Strengths Conference?** We are encouraging submissions for presentations by youth and family members as well as researchers, service providers, and others. For details and deadlines visit our web site: [www.rtc.pdx.edu](http://www.rtc.pdx.edu), or contact:

Rachel Elizabeth, Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health  
Portland State University/RRI  
PO Box 751  
Portland, OR 97207-0751  
phone: (503) 725-8118  
e-mail: [elizabr@rri.pdx.edu](mailto:elizabr@rri.pdx.edu)



## VALUING THE VOICE OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

Consider the following family's story, and how valuing the voice of our young people would affect your approach to providing assistance:

*A twenty-year old college student makes the decision to raise her two teen sisters. She has limited means but knows one thing with certainty—she wants to keep the three of them together. She admits she's not quite sure how she's going to accomplish this but somehow she will. As a service provider, how could you positively or negatively impact this situation? Do you have a sense that this family can somehow survive and be better off staying together? Or would you defer to tradition and be a skeptic to this family's potential? What other questions would you pose? Is foster care for the younger siblings the answer? Is the idea of a twenty-year old raising two teens too far-fetched to consider? Is there an array of community resources for this family unit so they can somehow manage and make it day-to-day? Would you get to know these young people, this "family", and allow their input, their voice, to drive a family support plan?*

In our day-to-day work in build-

ing and advocating for improved systems of care for children with serious emotional disturbance, we have all been touched by the heart-wrenching experiences and even tragedies children with mental health issues and their families have encountered. I am confident, however, that we have all had the opportunity to share in the successes these same children and their families have achieved. As advocates and policy makers, it is our collective responsibility to build responsive service systems and to continue to advance systems change so that many, many more children and their families will experience fewer tragedies and more successes, and ultimately, have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. An area of system change that deserves to be highlighted and discussed is the importance of **valuing the voice of our young people—empowering the youth voice** within a service system on both the service delivery and policy levels.

Traditionally, service systems are built to ensure the rights of the parent or caretaker. (Many would argue that even that does not occur nearly as well as it should.) To date, these same service systems do not proactively promote the youth voice. Many service providers and policy

makers may even have reservations in infusing the youth voice. To really drive the point, even our legal system is structured such that our children and youth have no legal rights. Clearly what is sorely missing is a service system's ability to readily hear our young people—child-serving systems have not invested the time or energy to build an infrastructure for youth empowerment.

As stakeholders of service systems, we, too, must step up to the challenge to infuse systems change by valuing our youth and weaving the youth voice into the infrastructure of systems of care. Too big a challenge to consider? Consider the following very real possibilities that can be implemented across communities.

### INDIVIDUAL AND SERVICE DELIVERY LEVELS

- Involve youth during treatment and service planning. Partner with additional agencies, especially with community based organizations, which already administer youth based programs. Highlight and increase the demand for these programs.

- Proactively solicit treatment ideas and therapeutic activities from the individual youth. The therapeutic benefit to the youth of feeling empowered during treatment is invaluable.

- Offer more treatment options. True informed consent is really about more treatment options. Fostering this type of open and engaging dialogue with a youth begins a process to really empower the individual youth. At its core, treatment options and decisions become youth-driven.

- Recognize that building youth-empowering service systems is a cultural shift for service providers, family members, and especially youth. As service providers, the more you engage a youth, the more the individual youth will engage you. Speak in a simple and easy-to-understand language—of course, this a good rule in general!

- Highlight youth programs and increase the visibility of such programs. Does a church or synagogue sponsor travelling programs? Recently a program in Baltimore sponsored at-risk youth for a trip to Africa. Are there local businesses that hire and mentor youth? More companies support employees in volunteer efforts to mentor youth (Fannie Mae, AT&T, Gannett, AOL). What therapeutic recreational programs are available? Can your agency partner with a local recreation or vocational/rehabilitation agency? (E.g. arts, sports, after school programs, volunteer partnerships with local animal shelters)

- Sponsor a youth-led peer-to-peer program. Such programs can be nurtured to serve as youth-led support groups and mediation programs.

*Examples: Korean Community Center in San Francisco, California offers both peer-to-peer and family mediation programs. T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Virginia runs a youth-driven mediation program which was recently visited by President Clinton and highlighted by CNN.*

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND POLICY LEVEL

Build and institute decision-making capacity within a service system for youth. Not only can systems be improved through increased input and recommendations, such a process in-

vites stakeholder buy-in, with our young people being the “new” stakeholder.

- Develop an independent youth council.

*Example: San Diego County, CA*

- Incorporate youth membership on existing local, state and national governance structures and boards. Adult mental health systems have traditionally instituted mandatory adult consumer membership on state mental health planning councils, protection and advocacy boards and committees.

*Example 1: Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health (FFCMH) and National Asian and Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse (NAPAFASA) are national organizations with youth board members.*

*Example 2: Youth Policy Commission of Alexandria, Virginia, includes two high school students on this local commission working on all issues related to youth, including issues of service prevention and integrating existing/overlapping community resources. Members of this commission include local judges and agency administrators.*

- Include at least two membership positions for youth on governance structures and boards. This builds a mechanism for youth members to uniquely support each other with the work at hand.

- Partner and designate an existing board member as a mentor to each youth board member. This measure helps to acclimate the new youth board member to the business of the board.

- Convene town hall meetings specifically targeted to youth on a regular basis (1-2 times a year). Allow youth to affect and impact the program priorities of your service system. Adult citizens are extended public comment periods on multiple projects. Why not extend the same opportunity to the young people of our communities? This ultimately builds stakeholder buy-in and builds the community’s credibility with its efforts on youth empowerment.

- Recognize and reward youth with leadership potential. Awarding even nominal scholarships (e.g. \$500 scholarships) can have a huge impact on empowering an individual youth as well as driving the community to rally around today’s youth.

Fostering an environment which values youth is vital in today’s society. Young people are an invaluable resource to communities. All too often our young people have concrete and creative solutions to improve our service systems but are often left feeling frustrated and jaded. This is our charge—as system change agents, we must take on the challenge of truly empowering the youth voice and restructuring and modifying our service systems to be responsive to our young people. Simply stated, these young individuals are our future and their voices deserved to be heard.

*Juliet K. Choi is an independent consultant on children’s mental health programs and policies. A long standing advocate on children’s mental health issues, she served most recently as Director for Children’s Services & Policy at the National Mental Health Association. She can be contacted via email at [julietjkc1@aol.com](mailto:julietjkc1@aol.com).*

## Two Initiatives to Promote Mental Health in Schools!

- A Policy Leadership Cadre for Mental Health in Schools
- Coalition for Cohesive Policy in Addressing Barriers to Development & Learning

For specific information on Cadre activities, The Coalition for Cohesive Policy, and about becoming a participant, see the website for the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA which is currently facilitating Cadre’s and the Coalition’s work.

The website is at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>, click on Contents, scroll down to Center Hosted Sites.

---

# YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

**I**n the past decade, how we think about supporting young people at both the policy and the practice levels has undergone a radical shift. A great number of youth funders, policymakers, and service providers are now concentrating on promoting the overall healthy development of young people instead of “fixing” specific problem behaviors through programmed solutions. While the significance of this shift in thinking in terms of principles, theory, and values has become increasingly clear, we continue to explore how these values and principles are put into practice and what types of specific changes are required throughout the system—at program, organizational, policy and funding levels—in order to effectively support young people’s development.

This paper reflects the work of the Community Network for Youth Development (CNYD) in close partnership with youth development researchers, and with youth agencies, public institutions, policymakers and the funding community throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. In the following pages, we provide an historical context for understanding this shift to a youth development approach and hope to consider some of its implications, both for practice and for larger system change.

## THE DEFICIT APPROACH

Over the past forty years, economic changes have eroded the base of social support available for young people. With the erosion of support for youth, we began to see a rise in problem behavior: increased youth violence, drug and alcohol abuse, higher school failure and drop out rates, and teen pregnancy. Driven by escalating citizen concern over these problems, policymakers began calling for programs targeted to address these

specific behaviors. This approach called for intervening when young people had problems, as well as identifying young people “at risk” and providing services focused on preventing the onset of specific, negative behaviors.

This narrow focus on young people’s “deficits”—their participation in or potential for problem behavior—led to the creation of a youth services system that has been largely fragmented and comprised of programs focused on isolated problems. As in the traditional Western medical model, practitioners have sought to identify and isolate particular problems or behaviors and treat or inoculate young people against them. Program success has been defined as the reduction of these specific behaviors in the target population. Furthermore, this approach has divided young people into two groups, those exhibiting problems or at high risk for problems and everyone else; and instead of providing more supports for youth at higher risk, our focus on isolated problems has led us to provide different supports for this group.

## THE SHIFT TO A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

Resiliency research has provided a compelling rationale for shifting to a youth development approach in policy and practice. First, as long term evaluations of these “deficit” focused programs became available, it was clear that single programs rarely achieved the success they envisioned in eliminating problem behaviors. Second, long-term studies of youth raised in high-risk environments had consistently documented that a majority of these young people grew up not only avoiding involvement in problem behaviors, but developing into healthy and successful adults. This body of research also—and most impor-

tantly—clearly identified the environmental supports and opportunities that tipped their lives from risk to resilience. Resiliency research shifted our attention to the larger environment surrounding young people, asking what this environment must provide to enable young people to succeed. We began to more closely examine the role of the different layers of support and influence surrounding young people: their families, schools, and communities. Research on resiliency consistently underscored the importance of caring relationships, high and positive expectations, and opportunities for participation and contribution in all of these settings: home, school, and community.

The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research (CYD), led this movement, launching a national mobilization campaign designed to transform concern about youth problems into public commitment to youth development. Academic research, such as Milbrey McLaughlin’s (McLaughlin, Irby & Langman 1994) ten year study examining the roles of community based organizations in promoting youth development, also helped shift thinking in the field. Public/Private Ventures and the Search Institute, further fortified the research and evaluation base by developing and evaluating large scale youth development demonstration projects.

These groups have successfully influenced policy nationwide. At the end of the past decade local and national foundations have adopted youth development principles. State departments such as education and human services, have begun shifting from strictly categorical funding to supporting broader based youth development efforts. Federal agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Juvenile



## The San Francisco Beacon Initiative

Beacon Centers are a place to learn and meet friends. A safe place to interact with caring adults. A place to discover and explore new possibilities. Picture this:

*The Beacon Center bustles with activities and people from before the school day until late in the evening. Parents drop off their children and stay for coffee. Senior citizens teach young people to read, while down the hall a child gets a flu shot from a City health worker. Kids practice Hip-Hop in the gym, while others are outside tending a community garden. The Youth Council plans a neighborhood clean up and, in the library, older kids help youngsters with their homework. Teens learn Webpage design, while neighborhood adults use the courtyard for a Tai Chi class. When the day ends — it's only a short walk home...*

Since 1996, San Francisco Beacon Centers have offered an oasis of support in a world where growing up is a major challenge. Today eight Beacon Centers serve neighborhoods citywide. Housed in public schools, Beacons offer programs and classes for children and adults. All are free and open to everyone in the community—after school, on weekends, and throughout the summer. Each welcomes as many as 1000 participants yearly.

Reaching out to all, Beacons focus on five core program areas: education, leadership, career development, arts and recreation, and health. To reflect local interests and diversity, Beacons are run by a community agency based in the neighborhood. More than 100 organizations citywide, parents, school staff, nearby residents, and youth join together to bring each Beacon Center to life.

Beacon Centers are designed to serve as a “platforms” for launching new services and programs. With core funding provided by the City and a collaboration of fifteen private foundations, the Beacons attract and leverage numerous programs for their community. For example, older adults tutor young children in reading through Civic Ventures’ Experience Corps initiative. Salesforce.com Foundation and PowerUp provide computers and staff to integrate computer skills into other Beacon programs. ConAgra and the SF Food Bank support the Kid’s Café at a Beacon where children cook for 100 of their peers every day!

All Beacon Center activities are designed with a strong youth development approach. We believe that every young person can reach his or her greatest potential with ongoing support and guidance, and the opportunity to grow in new ways. Beacon Centers provide youth with a safe place where they can make positive connections with adults and peers, assume valued leadership roles, and engage in challenging learning activities.

For more information about the San Francisco Beacon Initiative, contact Mindy Linetzky, Director of Public Affairs, at 415-495-0622 or [SFBeacon@CNYD.org](mailto:SFBeacon@CNYD.org).

Justice and Delinquency Prevention have embraced the approach and shifted research and program dollars toward community supports for youth development. Even historically risk-focused federal programs such as the Center for Substance Abuse Pre-

vention and Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities have responded to the compelling research on resilience and to the pressure from practitioners to implement a more positive—and effective—approach. A large scale movement toward a new

way of working with young people is underway.

### YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: THEORY APPLIED TO PRACTICE

Young people are seen as active participants in their ongoing development process which, rather than occurring “in a vacuum,” is naturally influenced by the young person’s environment and the supports they receive from family, peer group, school, and the larger community. Shifting to a youth development approach means that, as a field, we redefine our vision of success. We no longer define success in terms of the prevention or elimination of negative behaviors, but in terms of young people’s healthy development. And while we continue to employ a wide range of measures of young people’s success in transitioning to adulthood, as a field we agree on the ultimate long-term outcome we want for all young people:

*A successful transition to adulthood, where young people are able to support themselves financially, engage in healthy family and other social relationships, and contribute to their self-defined community.*

But what are the implications of shifting to this long term outcome for the youth service system? It effects how we work and how we measure our success. This calls for change at all levels of the system—youth programs, youth organizations, and policymakers and funders.

**Youth Development Practice at a Program Level.** Youth practitioners need to employ strategies that create positive developmental environments. We know from research that environments promoting healthy development must offer young people positive relationships and experiences to:

- gain social support and caring from adults and peers, a sense of belonging and a sense of physical and emotional safety;
- have input into decision-making and to take on meaningful leadership roles;



- become involved in the larger community, giving young people a sense of contributing and broadening their knowledge of their community; and

- expose young people to a wide range of challenging and interesting learning experiences, which build an array of skills and competencies—cognitive, health, and employment.

And how do we know that these strategies have an impact on young people? In a successful youth development program, young people report that, through their participation, they:

- develop positive relationships with adults who provide them with guidance and emotional support;
- have meaningful roles with responsibility;
- feel that they contribute to their self-identified community (whether school, agency, or broader community);
- are challenged by activities that help them grow; and
- master new skills.

To successfully implement youth development practice requires professional support and resources. Professionals who work with youth must have professional support through effective training and supervision to strengthen their skills. They must also build the capacity for self-assessment, in order to reflect on and continuously improve their practice. In this way we

are able, as a field, to demonstrate and be accountable for the impact our work has on young people. Far too often we fail to realize that even the most skilled of practitioners cannot succeed without these concrete supports available from their organizations. Below we outline some of the key resources and structures which organizations must have in place in order to support quality youth development practice.

**Youth Development Practice at an Organizational Level.** For organizations to effectively support their practitioners in creating positive developmental environments for young people, there must be a shared vision and commitment to developmental practice throughout the organization. Everyone in the organization, executive director, board and all staff, must agree on what constitutes effective youth development practice and appropriate developmental outcomes. Concrete structures and practices must be put in place to help practitioners help young people meet these outcomes. Without the support of an organization, those attempting to change practice will ultimately fail. In order to succeed, organizations need to provide training focused on building skills, provide supervision, and facilitate practitioners' reflection on

various strategies to improve programs. Other examples of organizational practices that enhance developmental practice include providing :

- low youth to staff/volunteer ratio;
- safe, reliable, and accessible spaces;
- continuity and consistency of care;
- on-going, results-based staff and organizational improvement processes.

Putting these structures in place requires organizational leaders to re-examine their management structures and how they allocate their human, physical and financial resources. An organization's success in supporting developmental practice can be measured, not only through their achievement of better outcomes for young people, but through their progress in putting these concrete structures in place to enable quality practice.

Just as individual practitioners need organizational support in order to be effective in developmental practice, organizations also need the support of the larger system to be able to offer young people the supports they need. To secure such support, organizations must be able to articulate how their structures support developmental practice and what their impact is on young people.

### **YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE AT THE POLICY AND FUNDING LEVEL**

Embracing a youth development approach at a systems and community level means creating a coherent youth policy centered on providing young people with continuous developmental support and learning opportunities across institutions throughout a young person's life. *National, state and local policy makers are ultimately accountable for ensuring that such a continuity of support exists for young people, so that they are fully prepared for adult life.* These decision makers must forge the necessary systems accommodations and ensure the flexibility of funding needed to meet these ends.

To support youth development work at the program level, funders



---

and policymakers must consider not only what constitutes high quality youth development, but also what organizations support this work. Funding must:

- be flexible and long-term to provide organizational and program stability;
- target the organization, not just the program;
- support the creation of youth development assessment and evaluation tools, and training to build the capacity of youth care workers; and
- support professional development resources for youth care workers.

The success of funders and policymakers in supporting developmental practice can be judged by the number of young people in a community prepared for productive adulthood. This requires the establishment of public-private partnerships, agreement on clear expectations and outcome measures, and the development of flexible funding streams to build capacity within communities.

## CONCLUSION

Adopting a youth development approach requires nothing short of the re-alignment of the entire system. We must share a unified vision, not only of our ultimate long-term goal, but also of what constitutes developmental practice and what appropriate short-term developmental outcomes are for our young people. All of us—practitioners, organization leaders, funders and policymakers—have an equal responsibility to work within our own arenas to refocus our efforts on promoting, and strengthening supports and opportunities for our young people.

## References

- Gambone, M.A. and Arbreton A.J. (1997). "Safe Havens: The Contributions of Youth Organizations to Healthy Adolescent Development." Public/Private Ventures.
- McLaughlin, M., Irby, M and Langman J. (1994). *Urban Sanctuaries: Neighborhood Organizations in the Lives and Futures of Inner-City Youth*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

For more information on this initiative and a way to contact individuals mentioned within this text please visit our website at: [www.rtc.pdx.edu](http://www.rtc.pdx.edu)

**The Community Network for Youth Development (CNYD)** is a non-profit organization that provides technical assistance, training, and resources to strengthen the field of youth development throughout the Bay Area. CNYD also serves as a technical assistance intermediary for the San Francisco Beacon Initiative, a city-wide partnership to establish youth development centers in schools throughout San Francisco.

To contact CNYD: 657 Mission Street, Suite 410, San Francisco, CA 94105 / (415) 495-0622.

**Mindy Linetzky** is the director of Public Affairs at the San Francisco Beacon Initiative, of the Community Network for Youth Development. Ms Linetzky is a strong advocate for youth involvement, development and leadership in every aspect of the community.

---

# WHAT ONE "YOOPER" HAS LEARNED ABOUT YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

I've been a Wraparound Coordinator for almost 5 years now in Upper Michigan. The town of Marquette has 21,000 people, while the County of Marquette has close to 70,000 people in it. Marquette is the most populated county in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan; the "U.P." is the chunk of land that connects to Wisconsin and is sometimes mistakenly included in the blue of Lake Superior. We are blessed to live on the shores of Lake Superior.

While not a native to the area, I can tell you the natives (often called "Yoopers") are fiercely proud of the natural beauty of this area, of their heritage and their future. The U.P. can, however, be a tough place for young people. While Marquette itself has

Northern Michigan University, a huge regional medical facility, a YMCA, a Children's Museum, a skateboard park and many city parks, even the towns lying 15 miles outside of Marquette leave these opportunities almost unreachable for many young people. We are 8 hours from Detroit, and yet only 3 hours from Green Bay, Wisconsin. For families and young people, however, our issues and Detroit's tend to be the same. My "southern" colleagues and I trade ideas about meeting families' needs for transportation, good childcare, jobs that pay enough to pay the bills, and ways to prevent too much and too easy access to illegal drugs.

What I've learned about the vital nature of involving youth in wrap-

around has come from listening to them in as many venues as possible. At our state conference, the teen panel has been the most important learning experience for me. We generally have 5-10 high school age youth on the panel discussing the positive and not-so-positive aspects of being involved in wraparound. When they speak in Child and Family Team meetings, I listen to what they say works and doesn't work for them both in their life and in the wraparound meetings. I ask questions and listen to my nieces and nephews talk about different groups they participate in. I listen to kids talk to each other, and what they say about how they are treated by adults. We know that we can't plan well for youth, if we can't plan with

them. It probably sounds like a pipe dream to think about having kids at all the meetings, and it is not always easy for us to have youth participate.

However, we have had some incredible successes and have been proud (and humbled) to watch these young people's skills develop. One of the things youth have made me keenly aware of is that sitting around a table or a living room is really a "grown-ups" style of doing work. We talk, we write on paper on the walls, we agree, we disagree, we keep working towards our goal. We follow an outline, a process, and a set of guidelines. Sometimes we have notes, sometimes someone takes notes—as facilitators, as professionals, these are skills we have been taught, we have practiced, and we are evaluated on. For the most part, I have found that as professionals we expect families and youth to have these same skills when we sit down for a meeting. It takes every-one time to learn these skills.

Help youth prepare ahead of time. This might be as simple as making sure they know they are invited and welcome. Let them know what happens at meetings. I'm big on using humor, and so, when I can, I may gently tease a teenager and tell them, 'I know you hate when we talk about you, so you might as well come to the meeting and hear what we're saying!' Know the young people you work with; maybe humor is the best invitation, maybe it's telling them, in brief, the benefits you feel it could have, based on the concerns they've expressed to you. Encourage them to write a list of questions ahead of time. Let them be the one who writes on the papers. Let them read your notes as you write.

I have been working for a period of time with a young woman, now 17, whose only living parent's rights were terminated 2 years ago. She used to hate coming to meetings, because she said we only talked about things that weren't important, and she never got to say what she needed to. I was fairly embarrassed to admit she was often right! In preparation for the next few

meetings, we discussed possibilities of statements she could make when she felt we were getting too personal, when she felt like we weren't listening to her. We talked about what to say when she felt like she was getting mad and was going to need to leave. We also talked about lists, and organizing her questions/statements into categories. We've only done this much work twice; now she makes her own organized lists ahead of time, and she's never left a meeting. She has, on many occasions, told us she's getting mad and she's "getting ready to walk out". We've learned this really means we are 'ganging up on her,' without realizing it.

She was also quick to point out to us that one of her needs was: "One consequence per inappropriate behavior, and not one consequence per worker." Get it? All five of us involved, because we cared, all felt like we had to talk with her and give her our opinion on the issue. Whew!! What wisdom! We have learned to back off and delegate whose responsibility it is to follow up with her, and mostly? It's hers. And her foster parents.

Once again, she taught us.

More than ever, with youth, like with anyone who is in unfamiliar territory in a meeting with professionals, it is extremely important to make sure no one is interrupting. Young people are very sensitive to the different power structures already created by age, and ignoring them or cutting them off only exaggerates their feelings that they are not welcome and that we don't care about their opinion. Again, teaching them ways to tell us to "back off" or "listen up" help a meeting flow and the young people feel like they have an equal seat at the table.

Encourage them to bring friends!! No one wants to go places like this alone! Ask them if they know how to explain to their friends what will happen there. Give them ideas, if they are open to that. Use your extra best manners when their friends come. Remember the developmental stage that adolescents are in, where they value their

## Seven Suggestions

Here are my Top 7 suggestions on being youth friendly in Wrap-Around, and my thanks to all the people who have taught me these lessons.

1. Eat. Have food. Remember how hungry you were after school, after work, when you're nervous. Besides, it's good manners, and people love it.
2. No put-downs.
3. Hold the line on no interruptions.
4. Laugh as often as you can.
5. Remember how hard it was to be 8 or 12 or 17.
6. If you serve coffee to the adults, serve the young people something to drink as well.
7. Learn young people's comfort zones, encourage them to set good boundaries, and help it happen if need be.

friends opinion much more highly than most adults, especially their parents. Their friends can say the same things as you, but youth might hear it much easier and quicker coming from a friend.

I saw this happen in front of my eyes, when a 16-year-old brought two friends his parents had invited to come. As a team, we had gotten stuck. The family was frustrated that their son was going to drop out of school. The son was frustrated that they weren't listening to him. Eventually, the friends of this young man were able to confront his parents on his behalf, but also confronted him when he wasn't listening to his parents. It wasn't magic, but it was the magic touch that night.

*Ruth Almen has served as a Wraparound Coordinator in Marquette County Michigan for four years. Ms Almen has additionally served as a state trainer for Wraparound Michigan and prior to that began and administered services for the first open adoption program in the Michigan's Upper Peninsula.*



## BRINGING YOUTH TO THE TABLE IN SYSTEMS OF CARE

As the result of nearly two decades of family advocacy, today, we acknowledge the expertise of the family when it comes to their children's needs. We must now learn to value and support the youth voice in this same way when it comes to their services and needs. Who better knows the effects of services than those who are receiving them? Who better knows what needs are being met or left unmet by our systems and providers than the youth themselves? We must have youth involvement at every level of children's mental health service design and delivery, the way that we now require family involvement. Youth must always be at the table.

The Technical Assistance Partnership for Child and Family Mental Health is working with the grantees of the federal Center for Mental Health Services' *Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program* to get youth to the table. The Partnership is working to:

- support, enhance, and disseminate the youth programs that are already up and running in the grant communities;

- help facilitate the implementation of youth programs where they do not yet exist; and

- model, on the national level, the importance of involving youth.

As part of this effort, The Technical Assistance Partnership is hosting a new listserv<sup>1</sup> for youth and adults working with youth in the grant communities, to facilitate the sharing of ideas and information and to help build a national community of youth leaders. The Partnership will also be hosting a youth page on its website ([www.air.org/tapartnership](http://www.air.org/tapartnership)) which will contain resources for youth programming, and information on current youth projects in the grant communities. With its youth initiative, the Partnership will emphasize the importance of training adults who are working with youth, and providing youth with the necessary skills and resources to be effective advocates and leaders.

The Partnership recognizes that to respond to the needs of youth, there must be a spectrum of programs available. There must be programs that 1) allow for youth involvement in their services and System of Care; 2) provide opportunities for peer-to-peer

learning; and 3) provide youth with training and needed resources. There are already many exciting programs underway in the *Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program* grant communities that represent this spectrum.

In King County, Washington, a group of young people ages 13-20 are involved in a program called *Health In Action* that focuses on how young people share their knowledge gained from their experiences with child-serving agencies in the system of care. The group of youth in *Health in Action* designed their own vision and mission statements for the project. Their goals are to:

- recruit youth interested in making changes in the system
- increase youth participation in planning and development committees
- develop mentoring for youth in the system
- support youth leadership training and participation
- sustain a community of youth who are leaders and participants in the system

The group is planning a Teen



## DEVELOPING A NATIONAL AGENDA

**Participants:** Brandon Fletcher, Logan Stickney, CeCelia Nation, Janaea Bel-lows, Kimberly Walker, Kendra Wooden, Mario Benavidez, Terrell Williams, Jill Schalansky, Minal Kode, Stephanie Lane, Angelique Harris

On September 18 and 19, the Surgeon General's office convened a major national conference on children's mental health in Washington DC. The purpose of the conference was to engage families, professionals, and scientists in a meaningful dialogue about issues involved in identifying, recognizing, and referring children with mental health challenges for appropriate, evidence-based services. Presenters and participants represented a broad cross-section of mental health stakeholders, including pediatrics, education, juvenile justice, psychology, social work, psychiatry, nursing, and public health. During the conference, break-out sessions identified commonalities across the diverse professional, scientific and family perspectives. Points of agreement and recommendations will be included in a final report on the conference, which will form the basis of a Surgeon General's Call to Action.

Conference organizers invited ten young people from around the country to attend the conference. During the conference, the youth met together to develop a statement that would communicate to the Surgeon General and the conference attendees their knowledge about the services they receive, their needs, and their vision for change in these services. They made points in two areas: obstacles to effective and successful services, and recommendations for overcoming those obstacles. On the last day, when the leaders of all the conference breakout groups reported to the Surgeon General and attendees the results of their groups' work one of these youth joined them on the stage. CeCelia Nation, a young woman from Alaska delivered the following message (written collectively by the youth) to the conference.

We are young but need to be treated as human beings and not as a problem or a disorder. We are prototypes, not to be treated as stereotypes.

School officials and health care providers must be trained to recognize and understand mental illness and its effects on us. The ignorance of the people who don't understand hurts us. For example:

Sometimes teachers who don't understand that mental illness is not just a behavior problem say that we "choose" to act that way.

Some professionals only take (or only have) a few minutes to deliver a diagnosis and "figure the whole thing out."

People who are supposed to be helping end up hurting us because they are not prepared and their training (and our lives) have not been made a priority. They contribute to the stigma of mental illness which is perhaps one of the biggest barriers to our service. It hurts even more when a doctor or teacher rejects you than when a peer does.

Now, I'm sure many of you are thinking that you would never do this to us, or that you are not ignorant in this way, so it's not your concern. We tell you from our own experience of the professionals out there that are ignorant in this way that it is your concern—because it's not going to change unless the system changes. And at least we hope that systems change is why you are all here.

Too often, once we get services (after fighting for them, or hitting a breaking point, or waiting for months), our services are hurried and disrespectful, and they don't respond to who we are as people, who we are in the context of our families and communities, and who we will one day become. Let's not forget that a lot of this is about who we will become and whether or not we will be able to dream and achieve our dreams.

I want to tell a story that one of us shared. *I had two friends—doing something that took them before a judge. One was sentenced to a detention center and one to a rehabilitation center (I*

*don't know why there was this difference). Six months later they both came back and it was amazing to see the differences. The one who went to the detention center got worse, surlier, and more troublesome. The other one came back transformed and really made a change in his path. Why are we so comfortable devoting resources to locking youth up, and so reluctant to put money toward treatment? Treatment is cost effective and beneficial for all of us. If you lock someone up at a young age with others who are like them (or more hardened) without people to really help them, they will get worse.*

Young people will live up to or down to the expectations of adults, teachers and professionals in their environment. Providers and systems must highly value and expect the best from us.

We need early prevention, better training for our parents, teachers and professionals, more awareness about mental health so that youth with mental health issues are not stigmatized and thrown away.

We need systems that can and do work together. Families, schools, and health care providers must collaborate in a collective effort to mobilize and train our communities to work together.

We need accountability with checks and balances. Services goals should be developed by youth and families—before services are delivered. Services must be evaluated according to how these goals are achieved.

For example—has the provider established a connection with us that we can trust? Are we being treated like an ordinary person rather than a disability?

You can do all the research you want, but if you forget who we are and what we need as people, and if you don't respond to our needs in the system and in our individual treatment, you will fail, the system will fail, and we will bear the burden as we do now. You must include youth, bring us to the table and when we show up, you must listen

**LISTEN.**



Health Summit on May 5, 2001. They believe that it will be the first health summit by and for youth.

At the Tennessee Voices for Children initiative in Nashville, Tennessee, youth participate in a Youth Council designed to help them inform and educate themselves about their rights and what services and supports might be available to them, as well as to educate other youth and adults about issues related to youth with mental health needs. This group is currently working on a newsletter and public service announcement, which will be funded in part by a youth empowerment grant won by one of the youth members.

At Nebraska Family Central in Kearney, Nebraska over 750 youth take part in Youth Congress programs which give youth an opportunity to empower themselves and make positive changes in their schools and communities as well as in their own lives. The diverse group of youth who participate in the program range in age from seven to twelve. Youth selected for the program might not already be leaders, but have leadership potential. The youth provide mutual support, and work together through shared leadership to develop an action plan which they take back to their schools to be implemented with the support of a school counselor.

An adult from one grant community, when asked what the biggest challenge in partnering with youth was, replied “Keeping up! The youth are really ready to work.” The youth in all of our communities are ready to be involved and they have a lot to say. We need to make the commitment to work with youth and involve youth to the fullest if we are to provide effective mental health services for them, and if we are going to help them find the resources and opportunities needed to empower themselves. The question that remains is, If we are going to make this commitment, can we keep up?

## The Technical Assistance Partnership's Vision

### On Youth Involvement: Juvenile Justice

The youth voice is a critical component in planning for and evaluating a system of care. Just as it would be ludicrous to design and evaluate a system of care without family involvement, it would be equally ludicrous not to have youth involvement. Through popular media, talk shows and other venues, many myths are perpetuated about youth attributes and trends. In regards to juvenile delinquency, popular media would have one believe that youth crime is on the rise, yet it is and has been on a significant downward trend. Hearing from youth directly, including youth in community leadership and involving youth as equal partners does much to clarify the strengths and challenges of young people.

—SAM BAUMAN, SENIOR JUVENILE JUSTICE ADVISOR

### On Youth Involvement: Education

The most recent reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires youth input beginning at age 14. At this time, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) must contain information regarding a student's course of study including: planning for transitions regarding employment, postsecondary education or training, independent living, and community/recreational participation. This law strengthens the involvement of youth in the special education system, and should bring about new initiatives to provide students with more information about their strengths, needs, and the resources available to them. Hopefully, there will be self advocacy training or objectives written into their service plans. With this emphasis occurring in their education program, youth voice can then carry over into individual service plans within the system of care.

We need to examine who the consumers really are—the youth and their families. Without the youth involved, and accepting of the supports, it is only words on paper. Whenever the child is included in their planning meetings, it adds an entirely different dimension to the content. Their voice should be heard above all.

—SANDRA KEENAN, SENIOR EDUCATION ADVISOR

### Resources

National Youth Development Information Center: <http://www.nydic.org/>  
National Network for Youth: <http://www.NN4Youth.org/>

The Milton S. Eisenhower foundation has documented What Works in Youth Development: [http://www.eisenhowerfoundation.org/frames/main\\_frame.html](http://www.eisenhowerfoundation.org/frames/main_frame.html)

Also, the Oakland Men's Project has participated in the development of materials related to violence prevention among youth:

Allan Creighton and Paul Kivel. *Helping Teens Stop Violence: A Practical Guide for Counselors, Educators, and Parents.*

Paul Kivel and Allan Creighton. *Making the Peace: A 15-session Violence Prevention Curriculum for Young People.*

To contact the Oakland Men's project: (510) 835-2433.

### Footnote

1 If you are interested in subscribing to this listserv, please send an e-mail to [l Stevenson@air.org](mailto:l Stevenson@air.org)

Lauren Stevenson, *Interim Youth Coordinator for the Technical Assistance Partnership for Child and Family Mental Health at the American Institutes for Research.* Dedicated to social change work with youth for many years, one of her accomplishments includes co-founding City of Peace Inc. in Washington, DC. an organization for youth that uses the performing arts as a tool for social change.

## NOTES & COMMENTS

### RECENTLY PUBLISHED

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, U.S. Department of Education's July 2000 Guide to the Individualized Education Program can be viewed and downloaded at: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS>

Print copies are also available from:  
Ed Pubs

Editorial Publications Center  
U.S. Department of Education  
P.O. Box 1398

Jessup, MD 20794-1398

(877)4-ED-PUBS

(877)576-7734 (TTY)

(301)470-1244 (FAX)

To obtain this publication in an alternate format (braille, large print, audio cassette, or disk) please contact Katie Mincey, Director of Alternate Format Center, at (202)260.9895 or via email [Katie\\_Mincey@ed.gov](mailto:Katie_Mincey@ed.gov).

### WELCOME TO NEW RTC STAFF

We warmly welcome new staff members who have joined the Research and Training Center this year.

They are: **Art Bridge**, Assistant Director for Operations; **Jonathan Cook**, Research Assistant; **Rachel Elizabeth**, Public Information and Outreach Coordinator; **Maria Everhart**, Research Assistant; **Donna Flemming**, Support Staff; **Jay King**, Support Staff; **Adjoa Robinson**, Research Assistant; and **Kathryn Schutte**, Research Assistant.

### FAREWELLS

The Research and Training Center wishes **Kaye Exo** great success and heartfelt thanks for her time and dedication to the RTC. After her years as the RTC center manager and Building on Family Strengths conference coordinator, Kaye has moved on to a position with the Multnomah County Developmental Disabilities Division. Kaye now works as a case manager for family support, in a unique program advocating for individuals with

disabilities who are parenting. She reports that she is happy to have returned to direct services to families, and that her current work is building on what she learned from working with families and researchers at the RTC. Kaye has also recently published a memoir about her father, *New Garden*, through the Fishtrap Anthology writer's workshop in Oregon. Keep up the good work Kaye, we miss you, and thank you again!

In August, Research and Training Center staff held a farewell party to honor **Myrth Ogilvie**, who had been with the Center for nearly five years. Myrth joined the Center staff in 1995 as a Graduate Research Assistant with the Support for Working Caregivers project. Bringing her rich practice background in children's mental health, child welfare, and elementary education to the Center, Myrth has been a valued collaborator in family support research. Her collaborative research with the family participation study was performed against the backdrop of decades of work with parents and children with challenges. Her final assignment with the Center was as the Principal Investigator of Common Ground, a study of cooperation between educators, employers and working parents of children with emotional or behavioral challenges.

Myrth leaves us to take a position as Assistant Professor of Social Work at the University of Washington-Tacoma. We will miss her lively contributions to Center discussions, and her solid and practical approach to the research enterprise. Our best wishes go with you, Myrth.

**Siobhan Colgan** leaves her post at the RTC to dedicate her energies full time to Project SUCCEED, a demonstration project to help families and Head Start teachers learn to more effectively support children with challenging behaviors and is still at RRI.

**RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER ON FAMILY SUPPORT AND CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH**  
Regional Research Institute for Human Services  
Graduate School of Social Work  
Portland State University  
P.O. Box 751, Portland, OR 97207-0751  
(503) 725-4040 (voice); (503) 724-4180 (fax)  
[www.rtc.pdx.edu](http://www.rtc.pdx.edu)

**Research and Training Center:** Barbara Friesen, Director [friesenb@rri.pdx.edu](mailto:friesenb@rri.pdx.edu) • Nancy Koroloff, Co-Director for Research [korlon@rri.pdx.edu](mailto:korlon@rri.pdx.edu) • Jennifer Simpson, Co-Director for Training & Dissemination [simpsj@rri.pdx.edu](mailto:simpsj@rri.pdx.edu) • Janet Walker, Co-Director for Training & Dissemination [walkerj@rri.pdx.edu](mailto:walkerj@rri.pdx.edu) • Art Bridge, Assistant Director for Operations [bridgea@rri.pdx.edu](mailto:bridgea@rri.pdx.edu) • Paul Koren, Center Methodologist • Rachel Elizabeth, Public Information and Outreach Coordinator [elizar@rri.pdx.edu](mailto:elizar@rri.pdx.edu) • Andrea Hanson, Jay King, Donna Fleming, Support Staff

**Underrepresented Researchers Mentoring Program**  
Jennifer Simpson, Principal Investigator

**Common Ground? Families, Educators and Employers:** Julie Rosenzweig, Principal Investigator; Paul Koren, Statistician; Eileen Brennan, Pauline Jivanjee, Project Collaborators

**Models of Inclusion in Child Care:** Eileen M. Brennan, Principal Investigator; Elizabeth Caplan, Project Manager; Arthur C. Emlen, Childcare Consultant; Constance Lehman, Special Education Consultant; Anne Brown, Sherry Archer, Family Consultants; Julie M. Rosenzweig, Myrth Ogilvie, Lynwood J. Gordon, Project Collaborators

**Guidance for Early Childhood Program Design:** Beth Green, Jean M. Kruzich, Jennifer Simpson, and Barbara J. Friesen, Co-Principal Investigators; Maria C. Everhart, Project Manager; Lynwood J. Gordon, Project Collaborator

**Service Delivery Models:** Nancy M. Koroloff, Principal Investigator; Janet Walker, Project Collaborator; Kathryn Schutte, Research Assistant

**Teamwork in Practice:** Janet Walker, Principal Investigator; Nancy Koroloff, Project Collaborator; Kathryn Schutte, Research Assistant; Paul Koren, Methodologist

**Families Members as Evaluators:** Nancy Koroloff, Principal Investigator; Kathryn Schutte, Research Assistant; Adjoa Robinson, Research Assistant

**Focal Point:** Elizabeth Caplan, Editor [caplane@rri.pdx.edu](mailto:caplane@rri.pdx.edu)  
• Denise Schmit, Pub. Coordinator [rtcpubs@pdx.edu](mailto:rtcpubs@pdx.edu)

#### NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Richard H. Angell, M.D., Multnomah County, Dept. of Community and Family Services, Portland, OR; William Arroyo, M.D., Dept. of Mental Health, Los Angeles, CA; Marva P. Benjamin, A.C.S.W., National Technical Assistance Center, Georgetown University, Child Development Center, Washington, DC; Ira A. Burnim, J.D., Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Washington, DC; Cleopatra Caldwell, Ph.D., Institute for Social Research, School of Public Health, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI; Terry Cross, M.S.W., National Indian Child Welfare Association, Portland, OR; Beth Dague, M.A., Community Based Systems, Canton, OH; Karl Dennis, Kaleidoscope, Incorporated, Chicago, IL; Glenda Fine, Parents Involved Network, Philadelphia, PA; Paula Goldberg, B.S., Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights Center, Incorporated, Minneapolis, MN; Craig Anne Hefflinger, Ph.D., Vanderbilt University, Center for Mental Health Policy, Nashville, TN; Kristina Hindert, The Children's Center, Salt Lake City, UT; Barbara Huff, Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, Alexandria, VA; Gil Latz, Ph.D., Professor of Geography, Portland State University, Portland, OR; M.J. Longley, Ed.D., Longley Enterprises, Ltd, Anchorage, AK; Brenda Lyles, Ph.D., Dept. of Human Services, Broward County SATC, Ft. Lauderdale, FL; Phyllis R. Magrab, Ph.D., Georgetown University, Child Development Center, Washington, DC; Betsy J. Migliaccio, Richmond, VA; David Osher, Ph.D., Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, Washington, DC; Larry J. Platt, M.D., M.P.H., Oakland, CA; Delfy Pena Roach, B.A., PBDC, Albuquerque, NM; George Singer, Graduate School of Education, UCSB, Special Education, Disability, and Risk Emphasis, Santa Barbara, CA; Sandra Spencer, We Care-FFCMH, Greenville, NC

# SELF EXPRESSIONS

## *Art & Poetry by Youth*

### UNTITLED

I can cry out and scream hoping you hear my  
every word  
Or I could just watch you walk by and let the  
message go unheard  
I could be lazy feel self pity  
Weep sulk and complain  
But I'd rather be strong and press on  
Towards a positive change  
I could blame my family and society  
For what they have failed to give  
Instead of letting the strength inside me  
Dictate the life I live  
I could be selfish and worry about me  
And all the things I need  
Or invest the same effort  
Towards trying to feed my seeds  
I could accept the violence and drugs  
That destroys our neighborhood  
But I wish to replace that grief with peace  
Sincerely if I could

—JOSH

### CHANCES

Chances do we really have them  
Tossed away like a bad article of clothing  
I was free, free of the hurt,  
free of the problems that lived beneath  
the roof of this urban apartment  
At the time the wrong way wasn't the only way but  
the best way  
Survival was the only thing that laid in the head of  
this young boy  
The mistakes belong to me  
But it didn't have to be this way  
If I only had a "chance"

—JT, RI TRAINING SCHOOL

### MY NIGHT

Torment is to manifest, anti biography.  
My bleeding ears and my blackened eyes are to  
agree.  
A vivid green personality, tragic decline in stability...  
Cruelty, and sadistic hatred is what this world has  
to offer and provide.  
Anti conformist, seclusion and rejected; denied.  
Happiness is the thorn in my side...  
A descending faith roaming the darkness of my  
night.  
A gleaming, glittering emerald moon light.  
Gazing at this morbid fantasy in devious delight...  
A plague of noise floods through my mind, baring  
its self: Hatred and decay.  
Crimson red truth trickles down, an obscene  
display.

—JESSE G

### WHERE AM I?

My twisted thoughts become my actions  
I'm somehow lost in my own head  
I try and try but still no satisfaction  
for reality and the next day are what I dread  
I feel like I have risen  
from the depths of my own grave  
I feel like I'm the portrait of a sixty year-old slave  
I know there is no reason for the way that I behave  
I feel I can't escape it  
that's just the way I'm made

—AT

### GOD BLESS THE CHILDREN

I'm tired of the abuse  
Causing children to change  
Because of spilling a little juice  
Not knowing how to behave  
I think children should be held close  
And cherished like a dove  
Given all of the support  
And 100 percent love  
I think children should be blessed  
By the Lord up above.

—TD



Left and  
above,  
drawings by  
LEROY  
MCLEOD

## Untitled

I sit on the warm beach  
as cool waves touch my feet,  
as I fall back into a sea  
of cinematic dreams of things  
I want to accomplish,  
and of the past, bad  
and the present,  
I ponder over fond memories  
of soul being, of control  
and independence,  
lust for power comes over me  
like strange waves in the distance,  
the sights I see ain't so pretty,  
but as I know things will get better  
slowly but surely

—ML



*The young artist Erik  
at work and play*



---

## LISTENING TO VOICES

I've been hearing voices recently. As a family therapist working in mental health programs, I've long heard stories about the voices that other people hear. However, since these voices have been speaking to me, I've made a point of paying attention to this experience and this is some of what I've learned so far. I've discovered that the less attention I give to the voices, the more insistent they become, even to the point of wreaking havoc in my environment when ignored. On the other hand, if I listen to the voices and make a good faith effort to do what they suggest, my daily life is much more productive and peaceful. Sometimes the voices are critical of me and tell me I must change; other times the voices offer words of praise, and sometimes the voices ask for my opinion. I've found it very helpful to talk about my experiences and I've begun to find that there are other people who are hearing these same voices.

Before you begin to worry about the status of my mental health, let me explain to you that the "voices" I am hearing belong to the young consumers who are being served by the mental health programs in which I work. I have been involved in the development of "Teen Advisory Boards" or "Youth Leadership Councils" in a variety of settings over the last four years, and have found this to be the most exciting and gratifying work of my career.

It seems to me that teen-agers in general, but especially teen-agers in treatment, are routinely excluded from the new table of empowerment. When asking about youth representation in a variety of settings, I routinely hear comments like: "They wouldn't understand what we're doing . . . They'd be bored/disruptive/overwhelmed/ intimidated." Other

exclusionary remarks have been couched in therapeutic terms: "They'd get the wrong idea about how much power they have . . . They would be frustrated when they couldn't have their way . . . They would only focus on negatives . . . They would try to undermine the authority of the staff." We would consider it politically incorrect to exclude any other minority group from self-representation on the basis of these "explanations," yet we routinely exclude teen-agers with such remarks. After years of experience with advisory boards, I can safely say that *these concerns are not any more true of teen-agers than they are of adult board members!*

By listening to the comments of young people, we have developed an approach to empowerment which we call "Advocacy Voice Lessons." Our "Voice Lessons" consist of four steps:

- 1) Learning to read the music
- 2) Rhythm
- 3) Voice control
- 4) Practice

**Learning to read the music** refers to teaching youngsters the specific skills of Board membership/committee representation/ group spokesperson, etc. To serve on a Board, one must be fa-

miliar with what an "Agenda" is, what the "minutes" are, basic parliamentary procedure of taking action through motions, etc. Each role that we are asking young people to play has these specific sets of skills and expectations, which can be taught as they prepare for their new role.

**Rhythm** is the step where the young advocate learns about the "system." In a treatment program, it would be important to delineate which staff member is responsible for which areas, where to find policies and procedures, and the process for making changes. Understanding this bigger picture of how a program/organization/group "rocks along" is a key step in learning how to have an impact.

**Voice control** lessons in advocacy consist of educating youngsters on several levels. It is important that they understand the tools available to them: inviting decision-makers to Board/committee meetings, sending a representative to meet with the decision-maker, drafting a letter to a decision-maker, developing a petition regarding requested changes, etc. It is equally important that young advocates learn how to control their voices (both literally and figuratively): issues and requests should be respectfully presented, and personal issues should be handled individually. Being an advocate means learning to speak for the group rather than focusing on one's own specific problem.

**Practice** is the final step in empowering young advocates. It is imperative that adult liaisons give supportive, direct feedback about the youth's efforts. Being given multiple opportunities to "try out" new skills is critical. It is also *imperative* that adults who are dealing with newly empow-





ered young advocates begin to practice a new style of listening in order to hear these voices.

What do we gain by listening to the voices of the young people we are serving in our programs? As program administrators, we gain valuable partners in developing creative solutions to programmatic problems. Our Board is currently focusing on the area of spiritual enrichment. They are looking at ways of including very diverse religious perspectives and practices in our campus spiritual programs.

We also gain time as our consumer partners can often save us the trouble of implementing a change only to find that it doesn't work. As we seek ways of doing our work faster and better in response to our customer's demands, we want to increase the likelihood that our program "improvements" will actually improve the program.

Most importantly, we gain a direct communication line to and from our consumers, which helps to minimize problems of miscommunication. Recently in our residential program we ended the lunchtime availability of carbonated beverages. Fortunately we had discussed the proposed change with our Teen Board, explaining that we would need to comply with some Federal guidelines in order to receive funding for our meal program. One option considered by the Teen Board was to reject the Federal funding in favor of serving sodas for lunch. The Board looked at the impact on this food budget loss would have and concluded that sodas at lunch were not so important. The Board members then interpreted this change to their peers, assuring them that their concerns had been heard, but the decision to eliminate lunch-time sodas would mean better meal choices overall. The change was implemented without difficulty.

As clinicians, we gain a new perspective on our young clients, and on our own actions. We know that people behave differently in accordance with the expectations of others, and many clinicians have been

## Building A Bridge For Youth Involvement

**M**artan Mendenhall currently serves as a board member for the Bridge Builders Project, a family advocacy organization located in Clark County, Washington. The Bridge Builders Project, with a mission of "Empowering Families with Voice, Access and Ownership," has a board composed of local community members, including family and consumers of mental health services. The first youth ever to hold such a position, Martan brings both his perspective as a youth and his experiences as a consumer of mental health services to the project.

Martan was asked to be a member of the board by a friend. While he admits feeling intimidated to speak up at earlier board meetings, he soon realized, "the adults around the table wanted to hear what I had to say and encouraged me to contribute my thoughts and ideas. By believing in what the board was doing and feeling their support I become a very active member."

As the youth representative he advocated for Bridge Builders to sponsor more youth centered activities. These discussions resulted in the development of an annual Children's Pow Wow, a space where children and youth can speak openly about the issues of which they are concerned. Additionally, he has been instrumental in organizing more activities for families to participate in, especially around the holidays. Ultimately, Martan feels his contributions have helped "the board get a better feel for the needs of the children and youth the Bridge Builders Project serves."

As a board member, Martan has acquired an array of skills. For example, "I have learned a lot about how to run an agency and gained many communication skills, especially feeling comfortable talking in a group." Martan also feels he has learned patience and how to better manage his anger. He says he has realized the importance of having an open mind and hearing other's ideas with which he may not totally agree. As a result of all these efforts on both his part and the board, his ability to work with other people whose opinions and ideas may differ, has increased dramatically. Lastly, Martan says the board has become like "a big family to me; they are there to help me when I really need it." He is proud of the fact that, in his role as board member, he also serves as a mentor to other children and youth who reach out to him in need.

The promotion of youth involvement and youth leadership within agencies such as Bridge Builders supports many different goals. For the youth involved it inspires a sense of self-efficacy as they see their efforts manifest in real change that benefits themselves and others. For the adults involved it affords the opportunity to learn firsthand what youth feel they need and the best means by which they should be served. In a model of adult-youth collaboration, youth lose their primacy as the object of the services and gain a voice as a partner in youth and family centered services.

delighted to see their toughest young clients taking minutes of a meeting, exercising leadership as an officer, or calmly giving input about an issue. We also begin to see ourselves through the eyes of our clients and to learn about the many unanticipated consequences of our actions. *An important shift occurs when we begin to work with*

*our clients as partners in their treatment, instead of working on them.*

As child advocates, empowering our young clients is an effective method for insuring ownership in the program and that all voices, child and adult, can be heard.

**Cheri Villines**, Development Director for the Devereux Georgia Treatment Network.

---

# LESSONS IN STRENGTHS-BASED YOUTH INVOLVEMENT: MINDING THE MAYS, THE DOS AND THE POSSIBLES

**B**y the time most youth find their way to therapeutic foster care they have heard all the mustn'ts, don'ts, shouldn'ts, impossibles and won'ts. They are well versed in what they cannot do, what they have not done, and who they should not be.

Imagine planning a vacation, and only being given pictures and maps to places you may not go. How could you choose a destination, let alone plan the route you'll drive to get there? Young people in care are often expected to find their way to positive change with little more than a "map" (or care plan) of things they should not do and professionals lined up to point out each time they take a misstep or a wrong turn.

Youth development and strengths-based perspective are popular concepts now with people who work with youth. Too often they resemble intellectual exercises more than tenets for good practice. As is frequently the case, the translation from theoretical musings to practice can be quite difficult. This piece shares some experiences one agency, Growing Home (formerly Human Service Associates), is having applying positive youth development principles into practice with our youth in therapeutic foster care.

## **THERAPEUTIC FOSTER CARE— BEYOND "MANAGING" AND "FIXING"**

Youth referred to therapeutic foster care tend to be viewed as difficult for the adults around them to



"manage." Often they are seen as having "failed" in regular foster homes and they have well-developed and often-practiced coping skills that are seen as maladaptive to optimal functioning.

Because therapeutic foster care is defined from a medical model, our referral sources are very much rooted in a deficit perspective. In a nutshell, youth are referred to us for help in "fixing" their negative or destructive behaviors. In many states care provider per diems are based on a "difficulty of care scale," basically a checklist of how "bad" or difficult a youth is for providers to deal with. It is sort of a built-in bias that assures each dif-

ficult behavior or personal characteristic of a youth is highlighted in charting and in staffing meetings. Providing foster care might well be the only job on earth that pays less for better performance.

In spite of the above, there is an increasing recognition that professionals working in direct practice with youth in care must begin taking strengths-based approaches to their work. Some of this recognition has been generated by the fact that it is becoming ever more clear that many of the methods and approaches traditionally used in foster care have not resulted in positive outcomes for youth once they leave care. Simply put, we need to do some things differently. Positive youth development, strengths-based practice, and community youth development are ideas whose time has come. Each of these concepts overlaps with the others, and when combined they create clear principles for

best practice for work with youth in care. Together, these perspectives can be loosely paraphrased as *Youth have voices. Youth, families, communities and agencies are better when youth are supported to actively use their voices.*

Youth development concepts apply generally to all youth. They refer to processes and experiences that are required in order for young people to develop the capacities necessary to lead successful adult lives. Like all other young adults, youth in care require normalized developmental experiences in order to prepare for successful adulthood.

Agencies providing foster care will

---

have to become deliberate in utilizing a strengths-based perspective and empowering approaches to work with youth in care if youth are to reap the benefits of youth development efforts. Unfortunately, there are numerous systemic ways that youth in care are told explicitly and implicitly that their voices do not matter, their relationships are not important and that the quality of their care experience is not relevant.

Many youth in care simply are not provided opportunities to participate in the types of activities that might help them develop the internal and external life skills that come through participation in various youth development activities. They are too busy attending to their “issues.” The strengths-based approach affirms youth as experts in their own lives and as leaders towards improving the care system. They have a passion born from the experience of living within the system.

### **GROWING HOME'S EXPERIENCE**

It is difficult to articulate individual events or to provide a clean, chronological accounting of how Growing Home came to where we are today in terms of youth participation. One caveat, we are not anywhere near where we want to be. We hold a vision at Growing Home of the kind of place we want to be, and the kinds of experiences we want youth in care in our homes to have. We will be striving to achieve that vision for a long time. The vision will change and grow the deeper we explore what youth development means for us and for the youth in our care.

Growing Home's roots and commitment to youth voice goes back more than a decade. In August 1987 together with other therapeutic foster care agencies in Minnesota, Growing Home hosted a small conference for youth in care. Patricia Harmon, Growing Home's CEO/President invited Alex Saddington, from The National Association of Young People in Care (NAYPIC) in England to address the youth. Patricia was determined

that Minnesota youth would have the opportunity to listen to Alex without adults present, as Alex had requested. With Patricia “guarding the doors,” to keep adults out, a spark was lit. The spark was not literal, as expected by many of the adults who feared a bunch of youth in care together in a room without staff supervision. The spark was of a different sort. Hearing, many for the first time, that in other parts of the world, youth in (or from) foster care were actually organized, connected with each other and participating in many ways to improve services to youth and families, they began to understand the power of their voice. Their hope was sparked.

Thus, The Minnesota Association of Young People Aware in Care (MAYPAC) was born. Adults and youth alike struggled with what MAYPAC should look like and how adults and youth should function together to make the organization work. Geography and limited clarity of direction led to MAYPAC's entering what I like to think of as a hibernation period. The organization has existed mostly just in name for about four years. The process of developing MAYPAC left behind a core group of believers—adults and youth who understand that it is a good thing to facilitate youth in care building connections with each other. We believe that agencies, the system at large and individual youth have much to gain by the amplification of youth voice. I remain confident of a MAYPAC rebirth. Like a phoenix rising. Much like the way many youth in care have risen through and over the unbelievably challenging circumstances of their lives.

Coming from the experience as MAYPAC's fiscal agent and primary “institutional” support, Growing Home's Board of Directors decided to take a decisive step toward integrating youth voice at Growing Home. They created a new position, Youth Development Director and hired the author of the present article, a social worker who was a youth in care, al-

beit quite a few years ago, for the position. They banked on the idea that having someone who had been in care in a leadership position at the agency would bring youth voice to the forefront quickly and powerfully. Positive youth development began to find its way into the consciousness of the agency. Many staff began to see the value in involving youth in things beyond their care plans, and many of us came to similar conclusions about the work to be done.

After literally hundreds of conversations with young people in care, and young adults who had aged out of care, some themes emerged. First and foremost, relationships matter. Young people express a deep desire for relationships with significant adults and with the community. Our kids want to be brought back into the fold of community life. They want to feel valued and capable, even on those rough days when they don't believe it themselves. They want someone to call when they are scared or lonely or struggling to read a confusing statement from their insurance company. They want to feel significant in the decision-making that affects them. Young people are also very articulate about things adults do, or don't do, that make them feel respected.

### **WHAT WORKS, WHAT IS IMPORTANT**

Consistently, young people list the following adult behaviors as contributing to a respectful relationship with youth in care:

- listening carefully and asking relevant questions;
- sitting quietly while youth talk; knowing the youth's name; and
- not working on notes in one person's file while “talking” with another youth (Chalmers, 1996).

They want conversations with adults that do not focus exclusively on the youth's personal problems. Perhaps, they queried, someone might talk with them about their thoughts on world events or politics or foster care services or music or cooking or dogs. Anything besides their deep,

---

personal “issues.” The things “regular” people talk about with other “regular” people.

Growing Home searched for a holistic, strength-based model for practice to help demonstrate our mission, our understanding of the perspectives of youth in care, and the ways young people say they wish to be treated during their care experience. This search resulted in the agency embracing a model referred to as *The Circle of Courage* (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 1990). *The Circle of Courage* is a model which combines established principles of youth development, attachment and positive parenting values and skills. The authors illustrated these core concepts on a Medicine Wheel, an essential image in American Indian cultures of North America. Notions of interdependence and connectedness are not unique to American Indian belief systems. They are core concepts in many spiritual and cultural perspectives. The four interrelated concepts, Belonging, Knowing, Becoming and Giving (Growing Home’s adaptation of the terms used by Brendtro, et al.) bridge the gap from mission to practice by providing an easy-to-understand template for thinking about our work. Growing Home staff adapted the model, originally articulated for use in educational settings, to work with youth in care.

### SUCCESSES WE’VE HAD

A number of other significant things have transpired at Growing Home directly or indirectly because of the involvement of youth. We created a strengths-based assessment tool grounded in positive youth development and holistic practice, and re-created our Comprehensive Care Plans to reflect these values. We’re committed to making opportunities for leadership and participation available to youth in our care, including national and international conferences, participation in training of care providers and/or social workers, began a youth in care newsletter, and began to regularly include youth written materials

into agency publications. Our Quality Assurance staff continues to explore ways to strengthen efforts to collect meaningful feedback from youth during care and after discharge. Growing Home’s Board of Directors has begun to formulate systematic ways to gather stakeholder input, including youth in care.

We are especially proud of two publications written by youth in and from care, together with Growing Home’s Youth Development Director: *Finding Our Place: The Inside Story on Foster Care* and *Passages: A Journal for Growing Home*.

The writing of *Finding Our Place: The Inside Story on Foster Care* began when young people in/from care were asked “what are the things you wish someone had told you before you went into foster care?” Their responses became the basis of each section of the book, which is basically a guide for youth entering care. Young people responded with enthusiasm when presented with the opportunity to be part of creating *Finding Our Place* and to helping other youth going into care. We emphasized the expertise and experience of the youth working on the project. We encouraged them to see their experiences as learning and the things they have learned as opportunities to teach. Youth wrote or audio taped thoughts, poetry, and stories for the book. One young woman transcribed most of the eight hours of tape. Other youth helped with choosing content and editing sections. The result is an outstanding book, which is given as part of a Welcome Packet to every youth entering care with Growing Home. The book and packet include information on the rights of youth in care, stories by and about youth who are/were in care, information about how the system works and what they can expect from court or social workers. *Finding Our Place* is also sold to other agencies in other parts of the country for use with their youth. We are proud of the endorsement from the Manitoba Youth in Care Network, who is using *Finding Our Place* as a model for writing their

own youth guide for youth in care throughout Canada. *Finding Our Place* provides information and helps build (international) community for youth in care.

*Passages: A Journal for Growing Home* is the most recent youth-focused publication produced at Growing Home. *Passages* is a journal written by Growing Home’s Youth Development Director after many, many conversations with youth about the experience of aging out of care. The journal provides a guide for youth to use together with a self-identified mentor. It leads the pair through experiences and conversations intended to build strengths in each of the four areas of the wheel within the context of community. A very special moment in the creation of *Passages* was in the experience of one young man from Northern Minnesota. John had been in quite a lot of trouble. He was in and out of detention and was rapidly approaching his eighteenth birthday, after which his offenses would be consequenced in a dramatically different way by the adult courts. John didn’t interact much with the worker who was trying to support him in his transition to independent living. The author had an opportunity to meet John while *Passages* was still in draft form. John was presented with the opportunity to read through the transcript and provide edits or comments as he saw fit. A week later a large package arrived at the author’s office. Inside was the product of 10 hours of John’s editing on the *Passages* manuscript. His comments were incredibly thoughtful and made a significant difference in the quality of the finished journal. His worker reported that she had “never seen John so excited about anything.” Upon receiving a copy of the published journal John immediately paged through and pointed out the changes he had recommended, and expressed great pride in seeing his advice utilized so concretely.

### CHALLENGES WE FACE

Integrating positive youth development efforts into our agency has been



an exciting journey, which has also presented many challenges. Our staff has to learn to walk in two worlds. They are learning how to see youth as competent and as having potential, while also emphasizing problems enough to address important issues and to keep referral sources assured that we are attending to “fixing” problems and issues. Recently Growing Home hosted a visiting social worker from Australia who commented that in our strength-based work, staff at Growing Home is creating our own country with its own unique language, culture and customs. She was right. We spend a lot of time translating.

A vivid example of the translation issue came up a few years ago when the author wanted to bring a young woman to a conference to co-present on the experience of being in care. The audience was to be primarily care providers and social workers or administrators. Mary, at that time 19 years old, had been in more than fifty placements, including family foster care and institutional settings. In an effort to “protect” Mary from potentially being upset by the experience of talking at the conference, referring workers and other key people were very resistant to her request to participate. It was a major act of translation or re-interpretation to help the reluctant professionals to consider the possibility that having the opportunity to teach others through her experiences was as likely to be empowering for Mary as it was to be traumatizing. In the end, the nervous professionals permitted her to present. Today, three years later, Mary has presented on her own at many conferences. She has been paid for many of her appearances, and has received a great deal of satisfaction as a result of these experiences. No, Mary’s life isn’t perfect. Her issues aren’t all resolved, and she still occasionally has very bad days. Speaking at conferences did not fix Mary, but it has provided a positive component to a life that was otherwise intensely focused on managing her mental health issues.

Another challenge is the difficulty we sometimes face in identifying youth to participate in given opportunities. Often youth are simply not seen as having the capacity to participate in activities or events that would require appropriate public behavior and the capacity to share their knowledge. If an individual youth is viewed by social workers and/or care providers as particularly insightful or articulate, it is still uncommon to find adults actively trying to nurture those competencies in meaningful ways. Scheduling and transportation problems become a sticking point, sometimes in a reflection of the ambivalence of staff and/or care providers. A beautiful testimony to the power of using one’s experience to teach others is the statement made by 17-year-old Joanie after she returned home from talking with a group of prospective adoptive parents. She and another youth in care spoke with the parents about what they might expect if they adopted an older youth that had been in foster care a long time. In writing a short article about the experience for Growing Home’s newsletter, Joanie boldly proclaimed, “this is the bestest high I’ve ever given myself by doing something good for others.”

Another significant challenge is getting “buy in” from individual staff and the system at large. “Empowered” youth are sometimes more difficult to “manage.” Until agencies and out of home care providers create mechanisms to support genuine dialogue between youth and adults, the system of out of home care will continue to run much more smoothly as long as young adults resist their inclination to ask “why?” Many youth have developed institutionalized apathy. They believe they don’t have any say, and that their words don’t always have much impact on final decisions. The system is disrupted when youth begin to find their voices. When youth have others reminding them that they are survivors, wise and insightful with experiences to teach others, the system is destabilized. That’s hard for adults. And for youth, because they

run the risk of being kicked out of placements if they are seen as being too challenging or disrespectful of adult authority.

Growing Home staff and care providers are committed to seeing the youth and families we help as much more than a collection of challenges, diagnoses or problems for which they are referred for Growing Home services. Instead, we believe that changed lives come from seeing and experiencing what is possible. Change seems possible when we focus on realizing our potential. We know that we need to spend at least as much time talking about capacity, contributions and connections as we do talking about problems, deficits and negative behavior.

*Listen to the MAYS child,  
Listen to the DOS  
Listen to the SHOULDs  
The POSSIBLES, the WILLS  
Listen to the HAVES  
Then IT WILL BE EASIER  
FOR YOU TO BELIEVE THAT  
Anything can happen  
ANYTHING can be*

—SHEL SILVERSTEIN

#### References

- Brendo, L., Brokenleg, M., and VanBrockern, S. (1990). *Reclaiming youth at risk*. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.
- Chalmers, M. (1996). Voices of wisdom: Minnesota youth talk about their experiences in out-of-home care. *Community Alternatives* 8, 95-121.



**Michelle Chalmers**, Youth Development Director For Growing Home, St. Paul, Minnesota. Ms Chalmers has worked with youth and families for the past 13 years and is a passionate advocate for systemic change which fosters voice and political action of youth in care. Ms Chalmers is an alumna of the foster care system.



---

# YOUTH MILLENNIUM 2000: LEADERSHIP IN PROGRESS

When it comes to developing a comprehensive system of care for adolescent youth with an emotional disorder and their families, a community must ensure regular access to adaptive, structured social activities. This can pose a significant challenge to the case manager or wrap-around team because these activities typically are difficult to locate and access in many communities, primarily due to eligibility, transportation and economic barriers. Rural populations experience these challenges even more prominently and often have to resort to crossing county lines in order to link youth to adaptive leisure-time activities. When activities are available, they frequently address only basic social and recreational needs on a limited basis yet fail to incorporate formal social skills training and leadership development, which are clearly desirable goals for youth struggling with issues of competency and self-worth. In Birmingham, Alabama a unique program called Youth Millennium 2000 has been created to address these and other youth development needs, with the ultimate goal of increasing youth leadership, resiliency and socially adaptive behaviors in the home, school and community environments.

## BACKGROUND

*Youth Millennium 2000* was formed in June 1999 for adolescents ages 13 to 19 years who are receiving services through Alabama's CMHS grant site. The Jefferson County Community Partnership operates four child and adolescent mental health **Diagnostic and Evaluation Units (D&E)** on site at juvenile court, child welfare, two city middle schools (Bush and Hayes) and two county alternative schools (East and West Campuses). Beginning in August 1998,



these units were established at key entry points within the service system in order to identify and serve "at risk" youth with mental health issues who were coming to the attention of court and child welfare officials or dropping out of school by the ninth grade at a higher than normal rate. The teachers and family representatives at Bush Middle School voted to name the units C.O.P.E. (*Children Overcoming Problems Everyday*) to reduce the stigma often associated with seeking help for mental health issues and to reinforce students for resolving their problems in a constructive manner.

D&E specialists and case managers at each unit work closely with eligible children/adolescents and their families to identify individual strengths and service needs. Since 1998, the C.O.P.E. units have evaluated over 500 children and helped families obtain access to a wide array of mental health and social services available through the system of care, all in an effort to prevent out-of-home placement of the identified child/adolescent client. The addition of a youth group was seen as an opportunity to develop a unique service in the community that was not previously available and would serve as a forum for youth leadership and empowerment.

## FIRST YEAR ACTIVITIES

From the beginning, *Youth Millennium 2000* was geared at adolescents within the C.O.P.E. program who had progressed in terms of managing their mental health symptoms, had leadership qualities that were being under utilized, and were interested in giving something back to their community. In April 1999, The Partnership recruited and employed 17 year-old Turi Tinker to serve as the first president of the group due to his successful meeting of personal goals within the program and his ability to relate to younger members in a firm yet humorous, engaging manner. Tinker participated in meetings with grant staff to set up basic goals for the group prior to the first official meeting. During the first few months, members decided on a name for the group, defined basic rules of order, elected officers to serve with Tinker, composed their mission statement, designed an official logo to print on tee-shirts and hats, identified social projects in the community and voted on recreational activities for participation throughout the year. In addition, the members decided to invite speakers in to address the group on various topics of interest. To celebrate the first anniversary of *Youth Millennium 2000*, members recruited Birmingham native and former NFL Rookie of the Year, Bobby Humphrey, to speak at the group's June 1st Oak Mountain Summer Blast Off Picnic, which was open to all adolescents involved in the C.O.P.E. program. Humphrey challenged the teens in attendance to maintain clear focus on their goals in order to avoid the peer pressure and substance abuse, problems he encountered in college and professional football.

## BUILDING GROUP COHESION

To help mold the members into a

cohesive unit, initial business meetings were augmented by structured social activities such as bowling, organized board and card games, a trip to the Jaycee's Haunted House and monthly dinners. As the first year progressed, staff periodically nominated other youth involved with C.O.P.E. for membership in the group. Many who were initially brought to a meeting to see how they would adjust and connect to the regular members soon weaned themselves out of the group when it became clear to them that the goals of *Youth Millennium 2000* went far beyond merely socializing and "hanging out". By the time the core members visited the assisted living home at Christmas to sing carols and deliver a gift baskets for the residents, it was apparent that the group had solidified and was ready to take on more challenging tasks with the onset of the new year.

### GOALS FOR 2000-2001

*Youth Millennium 2000* has now completed year one and is poised to take a more visible, responsible role in the Jefferson County community. With this in mind, members have identified several goals for the second year with the help of their advisors:

- Continue to receive formal training in social skills, leadership, cultural diversity, and peer mentoring.
- Recruit additional adolescents with leadership potential to join our group.
- Invite speakers every quarter to address the group on topics of interest.
- Produce a line of *Youth Millennium 2000* products to sell as part of a fund-raising campaign, to include tee shirts, hats, key chains, pens, bookmarks, etc.
- Write, edit and produce a newsletter highlighting the efforts of *Youth Millennium 2000* on a quarterly basis.
- Visit and work with the Patricians Assisted Living Program and Habitat for Humanity on a quarterly basis.
- Identify social projects for the holiday season to give back to the community in some significant manner,

such as co-sponsoring the annual "Stocking Tree" with the C.O.P.E. program, which provides presents for indigent children at Christmas.

- Expand local awareness of *Youth Millennium 2000* by partnering with 02 Ideas, C.O.P.E.'s communications campaign firm, to develop a speaker's bureau for youth to interface with local rotaries (Lion's Club, Kiwanis Club).
- Develop ideas for *Youth Millennium 2000* entrepreneurial enterprises that could potentially lead to endowment of college scholarships for members vested in the program over time.
- Promoting the youth group in the community for long term sustainability. Designing and printing an official logo and mission statement on tee shirts can help validate the youth group in a powerful way. It provides a visually stimulating illustration of their purpose and allows them to promote the group on the spot whenever the tee shirt catches the attention of a peer or adult in the community. Also, promoting the group through logo products is a great way to attract community and corporate attention for possible long-term financial investment. Addressing local community clubs, such as Kiwanis and The Lion's Club, is another way to spread the word about the youth group. Community action leagues are often interested in assisting youth leaders with obtaining college scholarships and could be excellent partners in general.

### LESSONS LEARNED

With any new enterprise, the first year of operation is usually the one in which the greatest lessons are learned. Fortunately, the members and advisors of *Youth Millennium 2000* have not had to suffer through too many growing pains and can point proudly to several accomplishments from the first year. However, for communities thinking about developing a youth group for adolescents with a serious emotional disturbance, several consid-

erations need to be made:

- The goals and objectives for developing this type of group need to be clearly outlined from the beginning. In other words, what is the purpose or the mission of the group? What outcome will the advisor, youth members, and the community at large be expecting? Youth members should have a direct voice in deciding what their mission is and how they expect to accomplish it. This ensures ownership of the process and reinforces the likelihood that they will commit to the goals and objectives of the group over time. *Youth Millennium 2000* was specifically created as a forum to develop social and leadership skills in adolescents receiving services through the C.O.P.E. program.

- The size of the group should parallel the goals and objectives. Trying to carry out a business meeting with 15 or more active adolescents may not be a recipe for success but a group of 10-12 who have clearly-defined roles and responsibilities with the group can accomplish a great deal. Training the officers of the group to set and maintain order with their peers will ensure a productive meeting every time.

- Decide on when, where and how often to meet. Meetings should occur at least 1-2 times a month in order to sustain interest and to realistically achieve goals and objectives. Advisors should be flexible in scheduling meetings after hours (5-8 p.m.) in order to allow for members to participate in other academic and extracurricular activities with their peers. Allowing a period of time for the youth members to meet and socialize without the advisors should also be considered, as this promotes independent thought processing and decision-making. During these periods, youth members have an opportunity to practice mentoring techniques with each other as well.

*The following voices tell the story of how youth can move from the periphery to the center of leadership and development in systems of care.*

---

## Confessions of a Youth Mentor by Ana Gorupic

When I first agreed to come check out *Youth Millennium 2000* to see if I wanted to become a youth mentor, I had no idea what to expect. The plan was that we would have a quick meeting with the members, visit the assisted living home in Fairfield and then go have dinner at Outback Steakhouse. As I walked into the conference room where the meeting was going to be held, I was greeted by some of the coolest kids I've ever met. They seemed very organized and determined about what they were doing and what they were involved in. During this meeting, the group was discussing fund raising ideas. For example, having a car wash, having one or more bake sales and a penny drive were suggested. Social activities discussed for the upcoming year included visiting the Birmingham Zoo, the Botanical Gardens or art gallery, working at the Human Society Shelter, eating out and going to the movies. As I listened and participated in the discussion, it occurred to me that these activities would give the *Youth Millennium 2000* group a chance to visit, get to know each other better, and possibly do some activities that they have not participated in before. I found myself looking ahead to the next summer when we could possibly work with Camp Birmingham. This would give all of us an opportunity to be positive influences in the lives of other young people.

After spending over three hours with the group, I left with the thought that it is important for these kids to have a good influence and that I could help with this. I could discuss my experiences with them and let them know how to make better decisions, as I have tried to do over the past year through the C.O.P.E. program. This could give me an opportunity to influence and be a good role model for the group. Helping people is an important thing to me and by being a youth mentor I will be working on a personal goal for myself. I'm hoping that this group will give me some

motivation to be more active in the community as well.

*Ana Gorupic is an 18 year-old full-time student at Jefferson State Community College in Birmingham, Alabama. She has been involved with the C.O.P.E. program since 1999 and will be graduating from the transitional living program to independent living in November 2000. Ana toured for three years as part of North Carolina's Jump Rope Demonstration Team for the American Heart Association. She enjoys poetry, reading, and animals. She hopes one day to work for The Discovery Channel.*

## An Interview with First Year President Turi Tinker

When he decided to withdraw from high school at the age of 16 to work full-time and prepare for his GED, 18 year-old Turi Tinker had no idea that he would soon be asked to serve as the inaugural president of a fledgling youth group known as *Youth Millennium 2000*. At the time, Tinker had overcome several obstacles in his young life with the assistance of his mother, case manager and a supportive therapist. In addition, his experience with juvenile court left him with a new respect for the judge and probation officer that challenged him to turn his life around for the better. It was this positive attitude change and a growing maturity that caught the attention of the youth group advisors in the spring of 1999 when they were considering possible candidates to help run *Youth Millennium 2000*.

Looking back on his experience as the group's first president, Tinker noted that he has learned a lot about himself that he never expected through this process: "I learned that anybody can be a leader. Most people never looked at me as a leader, as someone to depend on before becoming president of *Youth Millennium*." When asked how the group has impacted his life over the past year, Tinker replied, "It has cleaned me up a bit, my image is more important to me now. I know that people are look-

ing up to me and I have to uphold my image, which means I can't lead a 'double life' or be contradictory in my behavior." Contemplating what his life would have been like without the influence of the program, Tinker noted that he would have been "worse off. It would have taken me a longer road to recovery. It's kept me out of trouble."

This past July, Tinker officiated over the election of officers for the 2000-2001 year and was not surprised when 15 year-old Terrell Williams was voted president in a landslide. "I knew he would be in this position from day one of meeting him and I wish him the best of luck." What advice does Tinker have for his successor? "I would advise him to always hold up a clean image for the group and remember that it [his behavior] goes back to the community, the churches, the neighborhood, and the schools. He's like an ambassador now."

Now that he has completed his tenure as first year president of *Youth Millennium 2000*, Turi is looking forward to attending college full-time at Alabama A&M this fall. "I'm hoping it will help me obtain a regular job one day. My minor will be in criminal justice and my major may be in political science or sociology." When asked how he hopes to use this degree in the future, Tinker replied, "I'm looking at a job in law enforcement one day, maybe even become a detective."

On a final note, in early December 2000, Turi will take time out from his studies to share his experiences with the C.O.P.E. and *Youth Millennium 2000* programs at the 12th annual Federation of Families Conference in Washington D.C. Tinker, along with parent advocates and staff from the C.O.P.E. Juvenile Court D&E Unit will present the Jefferson County Community Partnership's system of care. Ironically, this will also serve as a reunion for Turi and his former juvenile court judge, Andra Sparks, as both are set to participate on a panel that will highlight how juvenile court and mental health services are being



successfully integrated in Jefferson County to help prevent youth from entering long-term care.

### Youth Group Advisors Help Reveal Hidden Talents in Members

Dedication, commitment, and high energy are just a few of the adjectives often used to describe C.O.P.E. case managers Chalonda Smith and Roderick McCants, who have worked diligently with clinical director, Jan Davis, to launch and sustain *Youth Millennium 2000* during the past year. In fact, the majority of youth group members have been recruited by Smith and McCants from their respective clients at Bush and Hayes Middle Schools, which says a great deal about their ability to identify and motivate youth with leadership potential. "I see a lot of different kids being able to come together and make great decisions about their lives and their community," noted Smith, who has involved several of the youth members with Habitat for Humanity. "My main goal for the Youth Millennium 2000 group is to see them become more involved in the community and to show other youth and adults that there are kids out there with leadership abilities who want to make a difference in their community."

According to McCants, members have hidden talents that are revealed through *Youth Millennium 2000*: "I see the leadership developing in them every day and some are writing poems, designing logos and brochures for us, all kinds of talents that this group brings out of them." McCants also noted that "those who were bashful are now speaking and are becoming leaders." But the best thing, according to McCants, is "the interaction I see them having at school with other kids who ask that about it [Youth Millennium 2000 tee-shirt] I see them put the mission statement to use everyday." Smith was quick to agree with this comment, referring to one young female member who "has gone from being a very defiant young girl to now being the secretary for the

group. She enjoys this responsibility and takes it serious."

Smith has also observed several of the youth members "take their rules of order from the group and use it to help them control their anger in other situations." Perhaps this is the true measure of *Youth Millennium 2000*'s worth when members take and apply the lessons and experiences found in the group to help them manage life's daily challenges.

### New President Will Expand on First Year Accomplishments

Described by his case manager, Chalonda Smith, as having "great leadership abilities that need to be nurtured," 15 year-old Terrell Williams is ready to take on the role of president of *Youth Millennium 2000* for the next year but admits, "It's a BIG responsibility." Williams has been involved with the C.O.P.E. program since 1998 and brings a multitude of talents to his new position. For example, Williams submitted the winning design for the C.O.P.E. brochure in 1998 as well as the logo for *Youth Millennium 2000*. He has participated in band for several years while a stu-

dent at Bush Middle School, earning drum major status before deciding this year to go out for football and basketball. Williams sees these activities as necessary to "keep me occupied and keep a good head on my shoulders."

In December, Terrell will turn 16 and hopes to obtain a part-time job at Just For Feet, since both his parents work in retail. Williams' case manager noted that this desire to work as soon as he turns 16 is no surprise: "I can see him in politics one day because he is always talking about work and how he could change this or that if given the chance." Williams gives credit to "Miss Chalonda" for helping him with his school performance and behavior by getting him the services he needed: "I'm helping other kids now with school problems because I've gotten better."

Regarding his involvement in *Youth Millennium 2000*, Williams described it as "a positive experience. We've been going out as a group now for a year and it's a great way to get teenagers more involved in activities that keep them out of trouble." The experience has also helped Williams see that "there's more to life than just



Above: Birmingham native and former NFL Rookie of the Year, Bobby Humphrey, speaks to the Youth Millennium 2000 members. Top right: Case manager Roderick McCants presents outgoing president, Turi Tinker, with a cake on his birthday. Right: Staff and members enjoy a game during Summer Blast Off.





---

having fun,” noting the group’s exposure to programs like Habitat for Humanity and the Patriciana Assisted Living Home. Terrell also expects that the responsibility of being president will help him in the future as he moves on through high school. His immediate advice to members of *Youth Millennium 2000*, “keep yourself occupied and out of trouble, talk and spend more time with your parents, and if you are having problems don’t be afraid to see our C.O.P.E. counselors because it [the problem] can be talked out.”

Williams’ ultimate goal for *Youth Millennium 2000* is “to move it to an even larger group, across our state and

in other communities around the country and the world.” With Terrell’s strong work ethic and high energy, along with the commitment of his fellow youth group members, this is a goal well within reach.

**Jan Davis, M.S.** is the Clinical Director for Children’s Services at the Jefferson-Blount-St. Clair Mental Health Authority, which is the lead agency for the Jefferson County Community Partnership. Ms. Davis is the co-author of Jefferson County’s system of care grant that was awarded in 1997.

**Chalonda Smith, M.S.** is a Child and Adolescent Case Manager II for the Jefferson County Community Partnership’s City School-Based C.O.P.E. D&E Unit,

which serves Bush and Hayes Middle Schools. Ms. Smith has been employed with the Partnership since 1998 and with Jefferson-Blount-St. Clair Mental Health Authority’s Children’s Services since 1997. Ms. Smith recently co-authored and won a grant to develop a home for unwed teenage mothers in Jefferson County.

**Roderick McCants, B.S.W.** is a Child and Adolescent Case manager II for the Jefferson County Community Partnership’s City School-Based C.O.P.E. D&E Unit. Mr. McCants was originally employed with the Jefferson-Blount-St. Clair Mental Health Authority’s Children’s Services “Project F.I.N.D.” program as a case manager before being transferred to the C.O.P.E. Unit at Bush and Hayes Middle Schools.

---

## YOUTH ARE THE FUTURE OF AMERICA

### FRAMING THE CHALLENGE

We hear this statement almost every day—from newscasters, politicians, spokespeople—but how many adults really believe this? According to a 1999 report by Public Agenda, 37 percent of Americans believe that today’s children after reaching maturity will make this country “a better place.” Additionally, 65 percent of Americans who say they have a lot of contact with teenagers describe teens disapprovingly. In the same article, when asked what first comes to mind when they think about today’s teenagers, survey respondents used adjectives such as “rude,” “irresponsible,” and “wild.”

A parallel issue is the fact that youth have accepted and adopted the negative perceptions of adults. Even though 70 percent of teenagers believe people should help each other because it is “the right thing to do,” only one-third of teenagers are convinced they can make the country a better place. This lack of self-confidence found in youth may be a direct result of adults’ lack of faith in youth. Many times,

youth are challenged by adultism, a situation where adults assume that they are better than young people are and entitled to act for them without their consent. Adults forget that age is not synonymous with wisdom. Under adultist conditions, youth find it difficult to let their voices be equally heard in a primarily adult arena. Incidents of adultism include devaluing a young person’s less “traditional” experience, talking in a condescending manner, assuming that a young person will be too young to understand something, or expecting that a young person will only know about youth, not about other issues. Adultism is something that pervades American society, and most times adults are unconscious of their attitudes and behaviors. However, it is this underlying belief that keeps youth from feeling like they can make a difference. Valuing youth as equal members of our society, as contributors now and in the future, changes the dynamic between youth and adults and establishes the foundation for a healthier and more productive relationship.

### Why Promote Youth/Adult Partnerships for Healthy Development?

For the most part youth want the guidance of adults. Some adults feel comfortable volunteering to mentor youth. However, in order to combat adultism and empower youth, adults need to accept a different role—a partnership role. Adults and youth have a great deal to offer each other—in a youth/adult partnership they can offer each other different perspectives and experiences that can lead to creating the best of both worlds. Both youth and adults have the opportunity to grow in this type of relationship. These partnerships can be used in all types of situations, from the board of a city council to a committee designing after-school programming to clinical work in crisis settings.

Youth participation is not a new idea. However, youth participation does not automatically equate to youth/adult partnerships and does not necessarily aid in the healthy development of youth. In fact, a relationship between an adult staff member and youth participant can even be

detrimental to a youth's development. For example, if a youth is put into a situation where the power is unevenly distributed in favor of the adult, the youth will simply continue to feel unheard and unengaged. This type of power sharing is tokenism, where adults set the agenda and make the decisions. Although young persons may be asked for their input, it is often not taken seriously or implemented. This lack of power contributes to the youths' feelings that they are unable to make changes in situations and issues that affect them. In a true youth/adult partnership, all members are able to practice and develop the skills that allow them to make important contributions. Both youth and adults can develop in an environment that promotes healthy mental and spiritual growth.

### What are the Strategies for Creating Youth/Adult Partnerships?

To create partnerships that depart from traditional youth and adult relationships based on imbalances of power, adult partners must first let go of their assumptions about young people's qualifications and competencies. For true power sharing to begin

#### Tips for Establishing Youth/Adult Partnerships

- Provide opportunities for youth to access power and use it in a democratic and responsible manner
- Make efforts to learn about youth culture and youth experiences in your community
- View people not as "age groups," "cultural/ethnic groups," or any "challenged groups," but as individuals, while at the same time acknowledging differences (e.g. age, experience, access to resources, ideas, etc.)
- Understand the potential trouble spots of creating youth/adult partnerships
- Strive for full participation by all parties involved



adults must give their youth partners the support to succeed. This usually means identifying and providing the training necessary for youth and adults to work together on chosen issues and activities, while having joint accountability and shared responsibility for those ventures.

Like every partnership, the purpose of a youth/adult partnership must be clear, mutually understood, and valuable to both partners. To foster this sense of shared responsibility both partners must feel that they have unique and important skills to contribute. Because many youth have not been regarded by adults as partners, and lack the confidence to work at their sides without feeling inferior, it is very important that adult partners recognize the powerlessness of youth in our society and impact on their youth colleagues.

Adults must be up front with youth about how few rights young people actually have (this varies state by state), and must also recognize their own adult privileges. This may mean, making some special considerations regarding issues such as time and location of meetings/events, so that they are convenient to both youth and adults. Adult partners will need to continuously familiarize themselves with the issues facing youth in their communities so that they can be sure that their language, behavior, and ideas will be culturally relevant to

youth. This process of better understanding youth experiences will simultaneously give adults new ways to approach their own lives and work.

### What Differences Can Youth/Adult Partnerships Make?

Moving towards power sharing is an exciting process. Deeper, stronger relationships have the possibility to form as control, influence, self-expression and accountability are valued differently. In a mental health setting, the creation of youth/adult partnerships serves as a catalyst for personal and professional development when youth learn to help themselves, and adults learn new ways to approach their work.

When an adult counselor and a youth program participant (we suggest using this language instead of "client") work together to figure out ways for the youth partner to manage his/her own mental health issues that are practical and sustainable, the counselor is freed of the burden of "fixing" the youth, and the youth is able to be more independent. An example of how youth/adult partnerships in a mental health setting stimulates people to reevaluate their attitudes and to approach familiar tasks in new ways, is found at Huckleberry House in Columbus, Ohio.

For years Huckleberry House, a youth-focused, family-centered agency committed to providing high

## Implications for Agencies and Clinicians

- Establish guiding principles that include using a strengths-based, youth- and family-centered approach; promoting independence and interdependence; valuing youth/adult partnerships
- Employ youth as staff members
- Create the organizational and program environments (such as norms, program guidelines, evaluation) jointly with youth participants
- Support staff training in effective youth/adult partnerships

quality services to young people and their families, has fully integrated youth counselors, aged 18 years and under, into the team structure that coordinates intake and evaluation, including the assessment of lethality. These part-time staff positions are identical to part-time adult positions in training, responsibilities, and wages, but are specially designated shifts during the after school hours that end before 10 p.m., so that they support most youth's daily schedule, an important part of youth culture.

Youth/adult partnerships at Huckleberry House have catalyzed situations and behaviors that lead to needs getting met, create conditions necessary for optimal growth, and build competencies. The youth staff have been supported by the team structure and have learned important skills from their adult partners. The adult staff have learned from the youth staff who are deft at engaging, or helping the participants "open up." Also, youth program participants have benefited significantly from youth/adult partnerships at the Huckleberry House because the youth staff are more adept at picking up on some of the participants' more hidden conflicts and pressures.

## Implications for Mental Health Agencies and Clinicians

Many mental health agencies now

have guiding principles for providing services. One such principle is "promoting independence." The struggle for mental health agencies is how to work with youth in achieving independence. Additionally, some mental health standards or best practice require or encourage use of a strengths-based approach in working with youth and families.

In Franklin County, where Huckleberry House is located, the mental health board has standards for teams of clinicians that are providing support services to youth who have a severe mental health diagnosis and are at imminent risk of needing to be placed out of the home or have need of a psychiatric hospitalization. A portion of the standards requires that the teams be strength-based and needs-driven. All teams must include a component in treatment plans that includes not only the strengths of the young person but also the strengths of the family. As the team develops ongoing plans with the family they must show in the treatment plan how they are building on the young person's and family's strengths. While it is still a challenge to get clinicians to think in this manner, these standards help immensely. All too often clinicians are focused on finding the "problem" and this helps them to refocus efforts on building young people's strengths.

Youth/adult partnerships are fundamentally rooted in a strengths-based approach and take this premise a step further by honoring the right of young people to make decisions about their lives. In this way, the foundation of equality is laid. The clinician's role is to support, affirm and build on strengths rather than serve as the expert who fixes problems. The youth is an active participant in treatment planning, not a compliant object nor a consultant outside of the process.

According to Evadna Fitch a former team leader at Huckleberry House: "Working in a youth/adult partnership mode is especially difficult for clinicians working with youth because they frequently don't think youth pro-

gram participants have the resources or knowledge to achieve to be a partner. Clinicians frequently plan groups on site at their agencies as opposed to looking for places to meet in the community. The latter approach gives youth the chance to learn about that community resource while attending a meeting. At Huckleberry House, very often it is the teen mothers who have better knowledge of how to access resources than do the clinicians. The staff learn a great deal from these young women. This is only possible because staff see these young people as a resource."

It is commonly assumed that young people in crisis or dealing with serious mental health or other challenges cannot make responsible decisions, cannot contribute, cannot exert leadership. On the contrary, this behavior often occurs—we simply choose not to recognize it because we don't like it or view it as inappropriate. Environments with adults in charge designed to control youths' behavior beg for rebellion (a clear expression of leadership). Environments established by youth and adults together, built on mutual trust and responsibility, promote respect and accountability. Huckleberry House is an excellent example of a mental health setting that turns no young person away and yet maintains a positive sense of chaotic order through the strong youth/adult partnership values that permeate the agency.

**Ingrid N. Drake**, Mickey Leland Fellowship, National Network for Youth

**Sabrina Ling**, Intern, National Network for Youth

**Evadna Fitch**, LISW, Team Leader Youth Services for Netcare Access in Columbus, Ohio

**Della M. Hughes**, Executive Director, National Network for Youth

## References

*Kids These Days '99: What Americans Really Think About the Next Generation*, A Report from Public Agenda, New York, NY. This report can be found at [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org)



# THE EXPERIENCE OF YOUTH IN FOCUS

## INTRODUCTION

Practitioners in the youth development field have long advocated youth leadership in community affairs. More difficult is identifying specific “best practices” to promote and sustain youth leadership over time. For ten years, Youth In Focus has worked to strengthen youth-serving organizations and enhance youth development by building the leadership capacity of youth and the capacity of the youth-serving institutions to integrate and sustain youth leadership. Our primary method has been research, evaluation and planning processes in which youth play leadership roles in collaboration with adult staff and professional consultants. We have found that our Youth REP (Research Evaluation Planning) programs provide a range of benefits to youth participants, youth serving organizations, and the broader community. This article will provide a brief overview of Youth In Focus’ services and their positive effects. The article concludes with observations about the implications of the Youth REP process for the youth development field, and in particular, its applications to mental health.

## YOUTH IN FOCUS

Youth In Focus (formerly Community LORE), a project of the Tides Center, is a non-profit consulting and training organization dedicated to institutional, community and social change. We believe that youth should be partners in community and institutional development, and that youth-serving organizations should find ways for youth to meaningfully participate in the research, evaluation, and planning of programs and poli-



cies implemented in their name. We think having “youth in focus” is a crucial step in fostering youth growth and well being, effective and innovative programs and organizations, and just and sustainable communities. Getting “youth in focus” requires that youth possess the capacities to serve as organizational and community leaders, and that adults learn to partner with youth in organizational and community development.

Youth In Focus helps community-based institutions, schools and public agencies throughout northern California and elsewhere promote youth leadership by playing several support roles.

1) Coaching organization leaders and professional evaluators on working with youth as full partners and integrating youth leadership into organizational structures and cultures;

2) Developing curricula for adult facilitators and youth leaders on planning and facilitating research, evaluation and/or planning processes;

3) Training youth within organizations to design and conduct research, evaluation and planning processes;

4) Facilitating the application of data and analysis from Youth REP processes into strategic planning within organizations;

5) Supporting the integration of sustained youth leadership within the collaborating organizations; and

6) Advocating for systemic changes in public policy, funding, and organizational cultures that will better support meaningful youth engagement in research, evaluation and planning processes.

Youth In Focus organizes its services around the “Stepping Stones.” The Stepping-Stones framework provides the skills and knowledge necessary to engage in a research, evaluation and/or planning processes. These steps begin with “Getting Ready,” and continue through “Orientation,” “Project Framework,” “Project Planning/ Instrument Development,” “Data Collection,” “Data Analysis,” “Recommendations,” “Implementation/Next Steps.” Train the trainer sessions and coaching for site staff, and direct youth training retreats with youth team members are all keyed to the Stepping Stones. We also offer shorter training programs in Youth REP methods, customized strategic and policy consulting, and technical support.

Two recent Youth In Focus projects include the Plumas County 21st Century Community Learning Center and the Juvenile Justice Evaluation Project



in San Francisco. In Plumas County (located in the California's northern Sierra Nevada mountain region), Youth In Focus worked with the local 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) staff to design and implement youth-led assessments of youth needs, interests, and concerns. Their work was coordinated with that of an external evaluator. The data and analyses are now being used to plan future 21st CCLC programs and to serve as a baseline for evaluation of these programs. In the next year, Youth In Focus will help site organizations to institutionalize youth leadership through research, evaluation and planning and to develop processes to implement the youth recommendations from the initial need's assessments.

For the Juvenile Justice Evaluation Project, we worked with a coalition of organizations including (RYSE) Rising Youth for Social Equity, Coleman Advocates for Youth, and the U.C. Berkeley Institute for the Study of Social Change to conduct a youth-led evaluation as part of the Delancy Street Foundation's comprehensive reform plan for San Francisco's juvenile justice system. Youth In Focus trained a team of youth to evaluate the impact of reforms (primarily alternatives to incarceration). This process enabled the Delancy Street Foundation to hear directly from youth, and to make important modifications to their reform approach in response.

## OUTCOMES OF THE YOUTH REP PROCESS

Youth REP programs have resulted in powerful and long-term outcomes for host organizations including the following:

- Restructured programs to better serve and engage youth based on the youth-generated data and recommendations to improve current programs
- Innovative new programs to respond to service "gaps" identified through the Youth REP process.
- Strengthened funding proposals that incorporate Youth REP findings.

- Increased youth participation in program and policy development by providing a forum for youth input and leadership, and the skills to fulfill these responsibilities.

- Changes in the way that organizations and communities value and integrate youth as partners in decision-making. Youth In Focus provides consulting and capacity-building services to adult staff to help organizations more effectively collaborate with youth.

- Integration of evaluation processes as an integral part of ongoing planning.

The outcomes of these programs can be seen at the individual as well as systemic scales. An example of individual development is the case of a staff member in the Plumas 21st CCLC who participated in one of the Youth REP orientation sessions. After participating in an activity called "Where do you stand? A continuum of youth involvement," this staff member requested copies of the activity to help promote greater youth involvement in the organization. In a letter to Youth In Focus he wrote,

*My idea is to use the "models" in the continuum as a guide to map and target the aspects and level of youth involvement in our program(s). I saw an image of our current state in the scenario that [Jean] had...youth involvement up to the planning stage, but the programs run by the adults. Aside from the youth projects, we have no "positions" being filled by youth...no leadership, youth staff, or council type positions. And no particular "models" to work towards, 'til now.*

One example of institutional impacts of the Youth REP process is the upcoming development of a Plumas County Youth Leadership Network to coordinate and sustain youth leadership on a county-wide scale. Another example is the integration of youth-based evaluation processes into organizations participating in Youth REP programs such as the City of San Francisco Department of Chil-

dren Youth and Families, San Francisco State University/RFK Fellows, and the St. John's Educational Thresholds Center.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

The Youth REP process developed by Youth In Focus is a promising model and resource for youth development programs and mental health in particular. Youth REP can open a window into the perceptions and needs of youth regarding mental health services and programs. It can provide youth with the skills to identify challenges and assets—on both an individual and community level—related to mental health, and the capacities to analyze and communicate their recommendations based on their findings to improve mental health and other youth services. Youth REP also enhances the abilities of professional staff, organizational leaders, and policy makers involved in mental health to work with youth as full partners, not simply as clients or constituents. This capacity building with adults is an often overlooked element of youth development, but one that we have found indispensable for sustained and effective youth development processes.

For more information contact Youth In Focus, 216 F Street #6 Davis, CA 95616. Telephone: (530) 758-3688; or 1203 Preservation Park, Suite 103, Oakland, CA 94612 Telephone: (510) 251-9800 or e-mail at [comlore@igc.org](mailto:comlore@igc.org)

Generous support for Youth In Focus is currently provided by: the S.H. Cowell Foundation, Walter and Elise Haas Fund, Grousbeck Family Fund, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, and the Zellerbach Family Fund.

**Jonathan London** is Co-Director of Youth In Focus (Formerly Community Lore), San Francisco, California. Mr London is a community planner and educator who brings his participatory research and leadership development skills into the work he coordinates with youth.



## PARTNERSHIP NEWS

**The Caring for Every Child's Mental Health Campaign, part of the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program**

### **How Do You Feel? New publication for children**

The coloring and activity booklet is intended to help young children better understand and recognize feelings as a part of emotional well-being. The booklet also encourages them to share their feelings with adults. Copies are available, free from the Center for Mental Health Services Knowledge Exchange Network (KEN) at 1.800.789.2647 (order # CA-0041). Or visit the web site [www.mentalhealth.org/child](http://www.mentalhealth.org/child) to access the coloring book.

### **Communications Academy 2000**

Phoenix, Arizona was the site of Communication Academy 2000, the first Academy of the Caring for Every Child's Mental Health Campaign part of the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program. About 60 grantee representatives participated in a two-day program focused on strategic communications planning. Workshops on developing and designing outreach materials, gathering information about community stakeholders, planning community and media events, presenting and speaking before the public and engaging the news media in systems of care were offered. The Academy will be repeated November 2-3, 2000 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

### **The 14th Annual Research Conference—A System of Care for Children's Mental Health: Expanding the Research Base**

The Research and Training Center for Children's Mental Health at Florida State University is now accepting applications to present at its annual Research Conference, to be held February 25-28, 2001, at the Hyatt Regency Westshore Hotel in Tampa Florida. This conference is nationally recognized as a forum for sharing the results of empirical research on systems of care, which promote the emotional and behavioral well being of children and their families. For more information, call 813-974-4661, or view conference information at <http://www.rtckids.fmhi.usf.edu>

### **The Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health 12th Annual Conference**

**December 1-3, 2000 in Washington, DC. Juvenile Justice and the Mental Health System: Improving Services and Supports for Children, Youth and Families**

Judge Glenda Hatchett, an advocate for ethical treatment of adolescents with emotional, behavioral, or mental disorders, is the featured keynote speaker. View con-

ference registration and workshop information at <http://www.bcfamily.com>

### **Surgeon General's Conference on Children's Mental Health**

David Satcher, Surgeon General of the United States, opened the first Surgeon General's Conference on Children's Mental Health: Developing a National Action Agenda, held September 18-19, 2000 in Washington, D.C. Themes addressed at the conference included "Identifying, recognizing, and referring children with mental health needs," "Health service disparities: Access, quality, and diversity," and "State of the evidence on treatments, services, systems of care, and financing." The Office of the Surgeon General is expected to publish findings and recommendations from this conference as a Call to Action in Children's Mental Health in 2001.

Projects that receive funding from the Center for Mental Health Services Child, Adolescent, and Family Branch were represented among the conference presentations by Barbara Friesen, Director of the Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health at Portland State University, Robert Friedman, Director of the Research and Training Center for Children's Mental Health at the University of South Florida, and Trina Osher, Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health.

### **New From the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice**

**Teaching and Working with Children Who Have Emotional and Behavioral Challenges.** This new guidebook offers positive and practical strategies and techniques for improving the education and meeting the needs of students with emotional and behavioral challenges. It can be ordered for \$10 each (quantity discounts available) from Sopris West by calling toll-free 1-800-547-6747, or via their website at [www.sopriswest.com](http://www.sopriswest.com).

**Addressing Student Problem Behavior — Part III: Creating Positive Behavioral Intervention Plans and Supports.** This is the third document in the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice's series on Functional Behavioral Assessment and Behavioral Intervention Plans. All three documents in this series are available free from the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice on its website ([www.air.org/cecp](http://www.air.org/cecp)) or by calling toll-free 1-888-457-1551.

**Addressing Student Problem Behavior: The Video Series.** This set of 2 two-hour video tapes shows how functional behavioral assessment is a useful and effective technique and demonstrates the value of behavioral intervention plans. For ordering information, call toll-free 1-888-457-1551, or e-mailing the Center at [center@air.org](mailto:center@air.org).



## NEW PUBLICATIONS!

To order these publications and more, use the order form on the following pages, call (503) 725-4175, e-mail [rtcpubs@pdx.edu](mailto:rtcpubs@pdx.edu), or visit our NEW web site at [www.rtc.pdx.edu](http://www.rtc.pdx.edu) for online ordering!

### *Research and Training Center Publications*

CAREGIVERS SPEAK ABOUT THE CULTURALLY APPROPRIATENESS OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES by Janet Walker

In “user-friendly”, non-technical language, this report presents the results of a study of caregivers’ descriptions of ways in which their cultural beliefs and values were, or were not respected and/or accommodated in the services provided to their children with emotional and behavioral disabilities. Nearly 300 caregivers from diverse ethnic, racial, religious, economic and educational backgrounds participated in the study.

### *Research and Training Center Conference Proceedings*

1998 BUILDING ON FAMILY STRENGTHS CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS. Keynote Robert Naseef, “Special Children, Challenged Parents, Caring Professionals”

1999 BUILDING ON FAMILY STRENGTHS CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS. Keynote Beth Harry, “Building reciprocal relationship with families: Culture in special education”

2000 BUILDING ON FAMILY STRENGTHS CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS — **COMING THIS WINTER!** Keynote Nirbhay Singh, “Holistic approaches to working with strengths: A goodness-of-fit wellness model”

### *Articles and Book Chapters published by other sources*

PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN THERAPEUTIC FOSTER CARE by Pauline Jivanjee. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 8(4), 451-461. (while supplies last)

PROFESSIONAL AND PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN THERAPEUTIC FOSTER CARE by Pauline Jivanjee. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 8(3), 329-341. (while supplies last)

POLICIES THAT FACILITATE THE TRANSITION PROCESS by Nancy Koroloff. In H. B. Clark & M. Davis (Eds.), *Transition to adulthood: A resource for assisting young people with emotional or behavioral difficulties*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

POINTS OF TENSION: MENTAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATION IN A MANAGED CARE ENVIRONMENT by Barbara Friesen. In R. Patti (Ed.), *The handbook of social welfare management* (461-480). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

### *Focal Point: A National Bulletin on Family Support & Children's Mental Health*

Back issues of FOCAL POINT, are available upon request! See listing on our web site, [www.rtc.pdx.edu](http://www.rtc.pdx.edu), call (503) 725-4175, or e-mail [rtcpubs@pdx.edu](mailto:rtcpubs@pdx.edu)

## PUBLICATIONS ORDER FORM

AN INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL COMPETENCE PRINCIPLES AND ELEMENTS: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY. 1995. Describes articles & books that exemplify aspects of the CASSP cultural competence model. \$6.50

BENEFITS OF STATEWIDE FAMILY NETWORKS: VOICES OF FAMILY MEMBERS. 1998. Describes issues, benefits, and impacts of statewide family networks in a user-friendly format with extensive quotes from family members to illustrate finds. \$5.00.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES. AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY. 1990. Reviews of literature from 1979-1989 covering topics relevant to siblings of children with emotional disabilities. Includes personal sharing and fiction, effects of children with disabilities on their siblings, relationships between children and their siblings, services and education for family members, and siblings as interveners. \$5.00

BUILDING A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF FAMILY RESPONSE TO A CHILD'S CHRONIC ILLNESS OR DISABILITY. 1992. Proposes comprehensive model of family caregiving based on literature review. Causal antecedents, medi-

ating processes and adaptational outcomes of family coping considered. \$5.50.

BUILDING ON FAMILY STRENGTHS: RESEARCH, ADVOCACY, AND PARTNERSHIP IN SUPPORT OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES. 1994 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS. Transcripts of plenaries including keynote Lee Gutkind, and summaries of paper and panel presentations. \$8.00.

BUILDING ON FAMILY STRENGTHS: RESEARCH AND PROGRAMS IN SUPPORT OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES. 1995 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS. Transcripts of plenaries including keynote Karl Dennis and summaries of paper and panel presentations. \$8.00.

BUILDING ON FAMILY STRENGTHS: RESEARCH AND PROGRAMS IN SUPPORT OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES. 1996 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS. Transcripts of plenaries including keynote Judge Glenda Hatchett and summaries of paper and panel presentations. \$8.00.

BUILDING ON FAMILY STRENGTHS: RESEARCH AND PROGRAMS IN SUPPORT OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES. 1997 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS. Tran-

---

scripts of plenaries including keynoter Carl Bell and summaries of paper and panel presentations. \$11.00.

**NEW! BUILDING ON FAMILY STRENGTHS: RESEARCH AND SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES. 1998 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS. 2000.** Transcripts of plenaries including keynoter Robert Naseef and and summaries of paper and panel presentations. \$12.00

**NEW! BUILDING ON FAMILY STRENGTHS: RESEARCH AND SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES. 1999 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS. 2000.** Transcripts of plenaries including keynoter Beth Harry and summaries of paper and panel presentations. \$11.50

**NEW! CAREGIVERS SPEAK ABOUT THE CULTURAL APPROPRIATENESS OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES. 2000.** In "user-friendly", non-technical language, this report presents the results of a study of caregivers' descriptions of ways in which their cultural beliefs and values were, or were not, respected and/or accommodated in the services provided to their children with emotional and behavioral disabilities. Nearly 300 caregivers from diverse ethnic, racial, religious, economic, and educational backgrounds participated in this study. \$4.50

**CHANGING ROLES, CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS: PARENT-PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL DISABILITIES. 1989.** Examines barriers to collaboration, elements of successful collaboration, strategies for parents and professionals. \$4.50.

**COLLABORATION BETWEEN PROFESSIONALS & FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH SERIOUS EMOTIONAL DISORDERS. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY. 1992.** \$6.00.

**COLLABORATION IN INTERPROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND TRAINING: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY. 1994.** Addresses interprofessional, inter-agency and family-professional collaboration. Includes methods of interprofessional collaboration, training for collaboration, and interprofessional program and training examples. \$7.00.

**CULTURAL COMPETENCE SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE: A MANUAL FOR USERS. 1995.** Instrument to assist child- & family-service agencies assess cross-cultural strengths & weaknesses. \$8.00

**DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING MUTUAL AID GROUPS FOR PARENTS & OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY. 1990.** \$7.50.

**FAMILY ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS: ADVANCES IN SUPPORT AND SYSTEM REFORM. 1993.** Describes and evaluates the development of statewide parent organizations in 15 states. \$8.50.

**FAMILIES AS ALLIES CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS. 1986.** Delegates from thirteen western states. \$1.00

**FAMILY CAREGIVING FOR CHILDREN WITH A SERIOUS EMOTIONAL DISABILITY. 1993.** Summarizes a family caregiving model employed in a survey of families with children with emotional disabilities. Includes review, questionnaire, data collection and analysis procedures and findings. \$8.00.

**FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN POLICY MAKING: A FINAL REPORT ON THE FAMILIES IN ACTION PROJECT. 1995.** Outcomes of focus group life history interviews; case studies of involvement in policy-making processes; results of survey data; implications for family members and policy-makers. \$10.25.

**FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN THERAPEUTIC FOSTER CARE: MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES. 1999.** Presents findings of case study in a local context, examining family participation from multiple perspectives. \$9.25.

**FAMILY/PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION: THE PERSPECTIVE OF THOSE WHO HAVE TRIED. 1994.** Describes curriculum's strengths and limitations, effect of training on practice, barriers to collaboration. \$7.50

**FAMILY RESEARCH & DEMONSTRATION SYMPOSIUM REPORT. 1993.** Summarizes recommendations from 1992 meeting for developing family

research and demonstration agenda in areas of parent-professional collaboration, training systems, family support, advocacy, multicultural competence, and financing. \$7.00.

**FAMILY SUPPORT AND DISABILITIES: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY. 1995.** Family member relationships with support persons, service system for families, descriptions of specific family support programs. \$6.50.

**GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS, LAWS, & TERMS FOR PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN HAVE EMOTIONAL AND/OR BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS. 1994.** Glossary excerpted from Taking Charge. Approximately 150 acronyms, laws, words, phrases explained. \$3.00.

**INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION FOR FAMILY-CENTERED SERVICES: A SURVEY OF INTERPROFESSIONAL/INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAINING PROGRAMS. 1995.** Planning, implementation, content, administration, evaluation of family-centered training programs for professionals. \$9.00.

**ISSUES IN CULTURALLY COMPETENT SERVICE DELIVERY: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY. 1990.** \$5.00.

**KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER: IMPLEMENTATION OF AN OREGON LAW ABOLISHING THE CUSTODY REQUIREMENT. 1999.** Describes the development of an Oregon law to prevent custody relinquishment and presents findings about family and caseworker knowledge of the law. \$8.50.

**MAKING THE SYSTEM WORK: AN ADVOCACY WORKSHOP FOR PARENTS. 1987.** A trainers' guide for a one-day workshop to introduce the purpose of advocacy, identify sources of power, the chain of command in agencies and school systems, practice advocacy techniques. \$8.50.

**NEXT STEPS: A NATIONAL FAMILY AGENDA FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE EMOTIONAL DISORDERS. CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS. 1990.** Development of parent organizations, building coalitions, family support services, access to educational services, custody relinquishment, case management. \$6.00.

**NEXT STEPS: A NATIONAL FAMILY AGENDA FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE EMOTIONAL DISORDERS (booklet). 1991.** Designed for use in educating about children's mental health issues. Single copy: \$2.50. Five Copies: \$7.00.

**PARENT-PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION CONTENT IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS: A RESEARCH REPORT. 1990.** Results of nationwide survey of professional programs that involve parent-professional collaboration. Includes descriptions of individual programs. \$5.00.

**PARENTS AS POLICY-MAKERS: A HANDBOOK FOR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION. 1994.** Describes policy-making bodies, examines advocacy skills, describes recruitment methods, provides contacts for further information. \$7.25.

**PROMISING PRACTICES IN FAMILY-PROVIDER COLLABORATION, SYSTEMS OF CARE: PROMISING PRACTICES IN CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH, 1998 SERIES, VOLUME II. 1999.** Examines fundamental challenges and key aspects of success in collaboration between families and service providers. Free while supplies last.

**RESPITE CARE: A KEY INGREDIENT OF FAMILY SUPPORT. 1989** Conference proceedings. Starting respite programs, financing services \$5.50.

**SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT FAMILY STRENGTHS. 1998.** Practical guide to effective media relations with tips for building relationships, crafting a story, writing news releases and building public support. \$4.50.

**STATEWIDE PARENT ORGANIZATION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT FINAL REPORT. 1990.** Evaluates the development of parent organizations in five states. \$5.00.

**THE DRIVING FORCE: THE INFLUENCE OF STATEWIDE FAMILY NETWORKS ON FAMILY SUPPORT & SYSTEMS OF CARE. 1994.** Highlights 1993 activities of 15 statewide family advocacy organizations. \$9.00.

**THERAPEUTIC CASE ADVOCACY TRAINERS' GUIDE: A FORMAT FOR**



TRAINING DIRECT SERVICE STAFF & ADMINISTRATORS. 1990. Addresses interagency collaboration among professionals in task groups to establish comprehensive systems of care for children and their families. \$5.75.

THERAPEUTIC CASE ADVOCACY WORKERS' HANDBOOK. 1990. COMPANION TO THE THERAPEUTIC CASE ADVOCACY TRAINERS' GUIDE. Explains the Therapeutic Case Advocacy model, structure of task groups, group process issues, evaluations. \$4.50.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ABOUT FAMILY MEMBER PARTICIPATION IN CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH POLICY-MAKING GROUPS. 1994. Ideas for enhancing family member

participation and conceptual models regarding increasing participation. \$6.25.

WORKING TOGETHER: THE PARENT/PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIP. 1987. Trainers' guide for a one-day workshop for a combined parent/professional audience. \$8.50.

A COMPLETE LIST OF OTHER PUBLICATIONS AUTHORED BY RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER STAFF. Lists journal articles, book chapters, monographs. Free. Also available on our new website, [www.rtc.pdx.edu](http://www.rtc.pdx.edu)

## ORDER FORM/MAILING LIST

Please send me the publications checked. \$\_\_\_\_\_ enclosed. FOCAL POINT Back Issues Order Form.  
Change my address as noted below. Add me to your mailing list.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_

STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ FAX \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**CHECKS PAYABLE TO:** PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY. **PREPAYMENT REQUIRED.** Quantity Discounts Available.

MAIL TO: Publications Coordinator, Research & Training Center, Regional Research Institute for Human Services,  
Portland State University, P. O. Box 751, Portland, OR 97207-0751

Phone: (503) 725-4175, Fax: (503) 725-4180, E-Mail: [rtcpubs@pdx.edu](mailto:rtcpubs@pdx.edu), Online ordering now available! [www.rtc.pdx.edu](http://www.rtc.pdx.edu)

Our federal identification number is 93-6001786. Please allow 2 to 3 weeks for delivery. Contact Publications Coordinator for rush orders.



PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

Research & Training Center

INDEX #228759

Regional Research Institute for Human Services

P.O. Box 751

Portland, Oregon 97207-0751

Address Correction Requested

Non-Profit Org.  
U. S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Portland, OR  
Permit No. 770